MASTODON THEIR DISASTROUS FIRST PRACTICE!

"IT WAS ABOUT MAIDEN AND BJÖRK FOR US!"

METAL HAMMER

THE HEAVY METAL BIBLE

EXCLUSIVE!
HANGIN' AT KIRK'S HORROR FEST!
OUT-RIFFING THE HET!
MORGUE DATE-NIGHTS!
REPLACING DAVE!

"I'VE WATCHED AUTOPSIES!" KIRK

METALLICA

"BRING ON THE F**KING METAL!"

DIO

IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS RONNIE

PLUS! COREY, LZZY, HALFORD, LEMMY AND MORE PAY TRIBUTE!

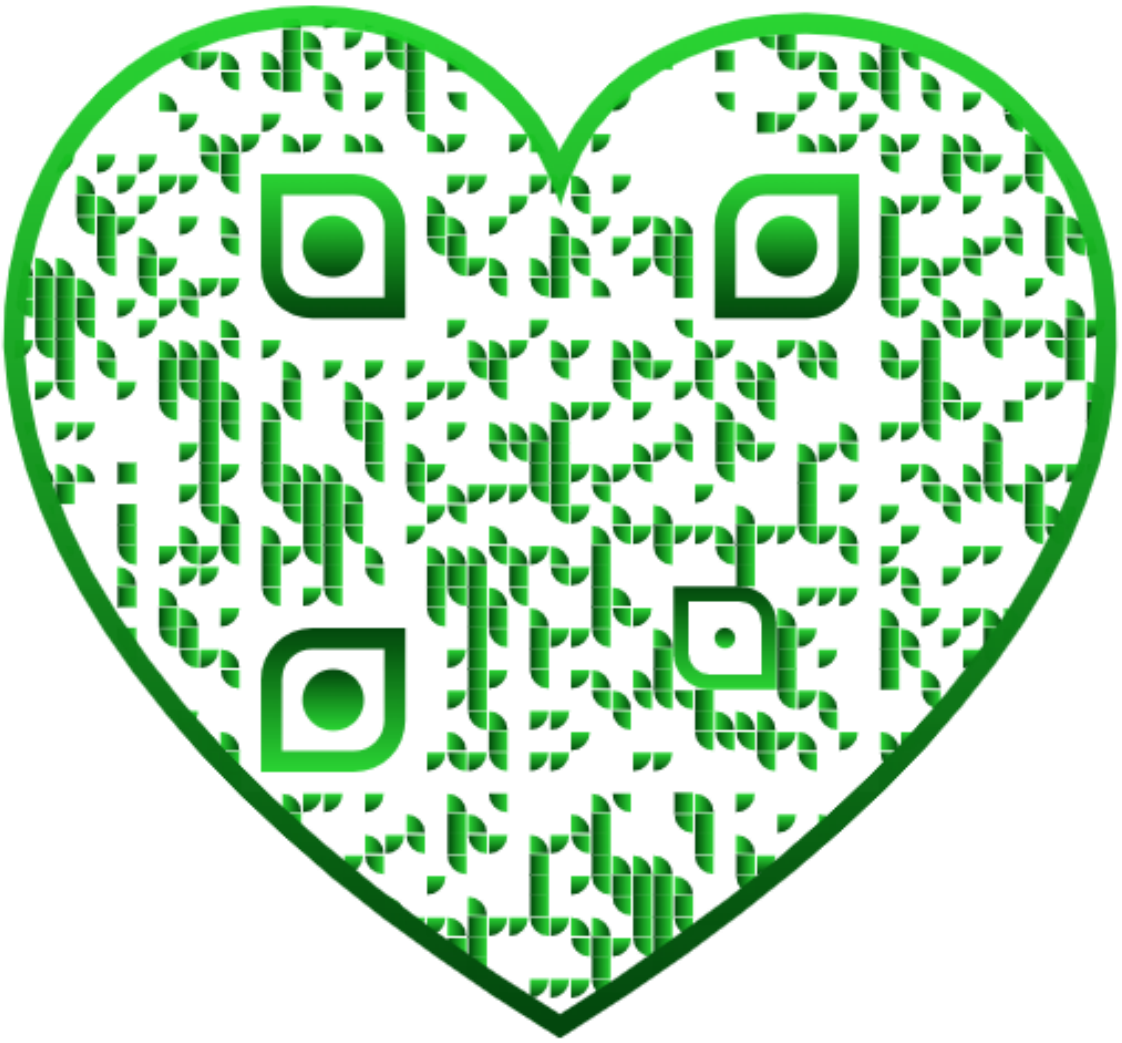
LACUNA COIL
ON ITALIAN PROG & SLASHER FLICKS!

LAMB OF GOD
"WE'RE SHOCKED WE'RE STILL HERE"

ALAYA
POP-SENSIBLE DJENT-FU

UPON A BURNING BODY
A TEX-MEX BREATH OF FRESH DEATH

TEAM ROCK



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METALLICA

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DIO

He had a voice like no other, one that spoke to peoples' hearts and souls. As the metal gods congregate to release an album in his honour, we celebrate the life of Ronnie James Dio, a heavy metal legend.

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We wind the clock back to the turn of the millennium, when four musicians from Atlanta decided to form a new band and set themselves on the path towards prog perfection.

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LAMB OF GOD

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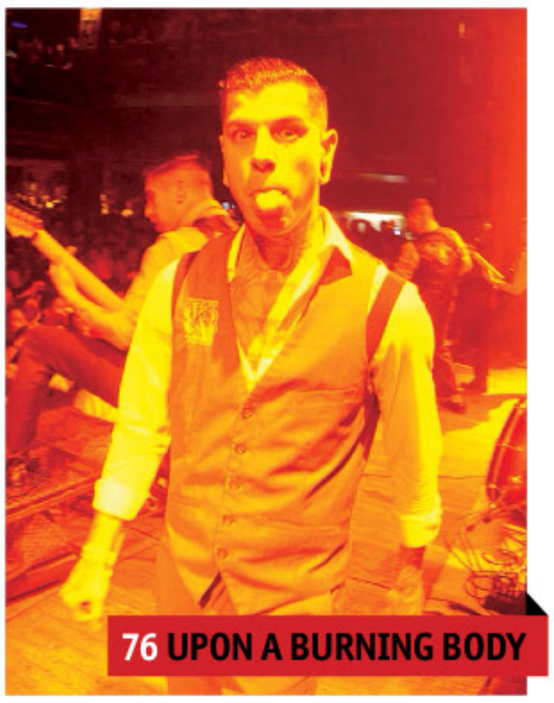

WHAT MAKES A METALHEAD?

Is it your record collection, the number of ticket-stubs in your drawer, or how many festivals you've been to? Or is it something deeper – a frame of mind, an outlook, or an approach to living that means no matter what your walk of life, you've got something in common with tens of millions of other people?

There is no rule, but if you're looking for answers, the life and times of Ronnie James Dio is a good place to start. More than a man, he remains the righteous embodiment of our culture, and so it should come as no surprise that the great and good of our musical community have gotten involved with such an incredible tribute to his music – read all about it on page 42.

One man upon whom the lesson hasn't been lost is Kirk Hammett, who threw a massive party for his horror-loving friends and proved success doesn't have to change you, it just means you can buy more stuff. We didn't just hang out at his FestEvil, though – with some titillating hints about the next Metallica record and an assurance that they've got no shortage of riffs, it was a rare, behind-the-scenes glimpse of a life spent geeking out and writing some of the most memorable guitar solos of all time. Nice work if you can get it...

That isn't to say there isn't room for some new blood in these pages. From the ethereal weirdness of The Oath to the outrageously heavy antics of Upon A Burning Body to the slick, progressive sounds of Alaya, this is a hell of a time to be metal, and no other mag is more committed to keeping it that way.

Oh, and if you fancy a little 161-mile heavy metal charity cycle ride to help children in need, flip to page 26 right this minute. Thanks for reading, and...

Stay metal!

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

ON THE IPAD EDITION...

THIS MONTH'S DIGITAL EDITION IS PACKED WITH EXCLUSIVE METAL YOU WON'T FIND ANYWHERE ELSE.

- ON SET WITH CRISTINA 'MEDUSA' SCABBIA
- ARCHITECTS PICK THEIR FAVOURITE UK BANDS FOR US
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METAL HAMMER

METAL HAMMER, 2 BALCOMBE ST, LONDON, NW1 6NW
EMAIL heresies@futurenet.com **FAX** 020 7042 4619

EDITORIAL
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF **ALEXANDER MILAS**
alexander.milas@weareteamrock.com
PRODUCTION EDITOR **VANESSA THORPE**
vanessa.thorpe@weareteamrock.com
REVIEWS AND SUBTERRANEA EDITOR **JONATHAN SELZER**
jonathan.selzer@weareteamrock.com
FEATURES EDITOR **AMIT SHARMA**
amit.sharma@weareteamrock.com
NEWS AND ONLINE EDITOR **MERLIN ALDERSLADE**
merlin.alderslade@weareteamrock.com
MANAGING EDITOR **ALEX BURROWS**
MANAGING DIRECTOR PUBLISHING & CONTENT **CHRIS INGHAM**

ART
ART EDITOR **JAMES ISAACS**
james.isaacs@weareteamrock.com
DEPUTY ART EDITOR **LEWIS SOMERSCALES**
lewis.somerscales@weareteamrock.com

CONTRIBUTORS: Terry Bezer, Paul Brannigan, Daniel Cairns, Cheryl Carter, Chris Chantler, Toby Cook, Joe Daly, Malcolm Dome, John Doran, Tom Doyle, Jerry Ewing, Connie Gordon, Stephen Hill, Emma Johnston, Dom Lawson, Dave Ling, Edwin McFee, Ken McIntyre, Joel McIver, Greg Moffitt, Mörat, Catherine Morris, Ben Myers, Dayal Patterson, Adam Rees, Alastair Riddell, Mick Wall, Holly Wright, Nik Young
COVER: Travis Shinn

PHOTOGRAPHERS: Derek Bremner, Stephanie Cabral, Ross Halfin, Mick Hutson, Will Ireland, Tina Korhonen, Eddie Malluk, John McMurtrie, Kevin Nixon, Jake Owens, Sam Scott-Hunter, Ester Segarra, James Sharrock, Travis Shinn

COMMERCIAL
COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR **JIMMY DOCHERTY**
T 01698 894357 **E** jimmy@weareteamrock.com
ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER **JOHN BISCOMB**
T 020 7042 4255 / 07770 648 533 **E** john.biscomb@weareteamrock.com
HEAD OF EVENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS **IAN WILLIAMSON**
T 020 7042 4102 / 07985 450 389 **E** ian.williamson@weareteamrock.com
HEAD OF DIGITAL AND MOBILE **SIMON BINNS**
T 020 7042 4105 / 07507 865 936 **E** simon.binns@weareteamrock.com
HEAD OF RADIO & SP **KATY ADAIR**
T 020 7042 4103 / 07506 106 093 **E** katy.adair@weareteamrock.com
SALES EXECUTIVE **LUCY HELLINGS**
T 020 7042 4104 **E** lucy.hellings@weareteamrock.com
SALES EXECUTIVE **LAURA RICHARDSON**
T 020 7042 4261 **E** laura.richardson@weareteamrock.com
ADVERTISING OPERATIONS MANAGER **FABIO ZANCANI**
T 0207 042 4178 **E** fabio.zancani@weareteamrock.com
SALES EXECUTIVE **RICHARD PITA**
T 020 7042 4141 **E** richard.pita@weareteamrock.com

MARKETING
HEAD OF MARKETING **ALIX THOMPSON**
T 020 7042 4051 **E** alix.thompson@weareteamrock.com
MARKETING MANAGER **HANNAH BURCH**
T 020 7042 4058 **E** hannah.burch@weareteamrock.com
MARKETING EXECUTIVE **LYDIA HIGGINS**
T 020 7042 4028 **E** lydia.higgins@weareteamrock.com
DIRECT MARKETING MANAGER **ASHLEY HICKMAN**
T 020 7042 4026 **E** ashley.hickman@weareteamrock.com

DIRECTORS
CHAIRMAN **JOHN MYERS**
CEO **BILLY ANDERSON**
CHIEF OPERATIONS DIRECTOR **ALAN CLARKE**
MANAGING DIRECTOR, PUBLISHING & CONTENT **CHRIS INGHAM**
COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR **JIMMY DOCHERTY**
FINANCE DIRECTOR **STUART KILBY**
INSIGHT DIRECTOR **CAMERON PIRIE**
CHIEF DIGITAL & INNOVATION DIRECTOR **CIARÁN O'TOOLE**
HEAD OF RADIO **HUGH 'MOOSE' EVANS**
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ADMIN
EXECUTIVE PA **MAGGI McCAFFREY**
LOGISTICS & SECURITY **RAB LOWE**

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NEWS ✠ COMMENT ✠ HEAVY FUCKING METAL

HERESIES

READER BLASPHEMIES

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HAMMER STEREO

MESSENGER
ILLUSORY BLUES

"A prog-rock psych-blues masterpiece that's heavy as hell"
ALEXANDER MILAS
MR INDEFATIGABLE

MESSENGER
ILLUSORY BLUES

"A masterclass in rock and prog fusion. Pure class"
JAMES ISAACS
MR BIG

BEHEMOTH
THE SATANIST

"Still utterly destroying my headphones. Amazing"
LEWIS SOMERSCALES
MR NO

DEAD SOUL
IN THE DARKNESS

"Wish I'd known of this album last year – it would've made my Critics' Top 5 easily!"
VANESSA THORPE
LITTLE MISS BITCH

BONG
STONER ROCK

"You have nothing to lose but your grip on reality"
JONATHAN SELZER
MR DAYDREAM

COIL / NIN
RECOILED

"NIN classics get twisted and bent beyond recognition. Disturbing!"
AMIT SHARMA
MR CUNTY

MASSACRE
BACK FROM BEYOND

"Skull-smashing return from the death metal gods"
DOM LAWSON
MR CHEERFUL

BURY TOMORROW
RUNES

"Britain's premiere metalcore band have done it again"
MERLIN ALDERSLADE
MR TALL

LETTER OF THE MONTH

RESOLUTION

Randy Blythe was just put through the wringer on a bogus manslaughter charge and he *still* finished the commitments he had. Give the man a break. Give the band a break. Let them relax and spend private time with their families, then let them come back with a renewed aggression and let them write another amazing record to support. They are humans too.
JIMMY WINDLE, FACEBOOK

We think it's fair to say that few metal bands in the known universe have had a more turbulent 18 months than the Lamb Of God boys, and Randy in particular. The way he has handled himself through that immensely difficult time has been nothing short of inspiring, and we wish him all the best and hope he comes back strong when he's ready to commit to LOG once again.

Time for some good old R&R

SEND IN YOUR RANTS AND THE ONE THAT MAKES US LAUGH UNTIL WEE COMES OUT GETS A HOBGOBLIN SHIRT! WWW.WYCHWOOD.CO.UK

BRING ME THE PLAUDITS

I can't believe people are still getting angry at Bring Me now they're booked for Wembley. If you only listen to shitty underground bands, stick to them! No one cares about whether you like metal's successful bands or not. Can't we just be happy that a British band doing their own thing have landed a fucking Wembley gig? Why is that not a good thing? Booooo!
JED BAKET, EMAIL

Anyone left surprised at BMTH getting to headline an arena hasn't been paying attention. Is it for everyone? Of course not. Is it worth crying over? Definitely not. If you're bored by rock and metal's big hitters, go and check out some of the exciting, new and underground sounds heading your way this month within these very pages. Go on! Do it! We'll wait while you have a listen.

GRAMMY-WHAMMY

Do people still care about the Grammys? Yeah, Metallica getting to play it was kinda cool (a bit weird if I'm being honest; that Lang Lang thing was nuts) and despite Trent spitting his dummy out that NIN/Grohl/Queens thing was amazing, the awards are a total nothing, right? When have the Grammys ever been relevant? Led Zeppelin won an award for a live album, for fuck's sake.
THOM GREENWELL, FACEBOOK

Yeah, we're not gonna lie; when it comes down to it, the Grammys feel about as important as a Crazy Town reunion (sorry, lads). But hey, if it means Sabbath get to pick up more gongs and we get to see, ahem, unique showings like the above, we're down with it.

OF MICE & MOAN

Not being funny, but I really don't get what Of Mice & Men have tried to do with *Restoring Force*. There's some good songs on there but the whole nu metal thing is a bit mystifying, to be honest, and I don't think Aaron's clean vocals stand up to Shayley's at all. Not writing them off, just think it's a shame, is all.
TIM BROOKS, FACEBOOK

As does seem to be the case with a lot of young bands on the cusp of greatness, Of Mice & Men have opted to take some big risks with their new album. Some are unsure about it, some love it – but everyone's talking about it. Don't bet against them being humongous this year.

Not Cradle Of Filth

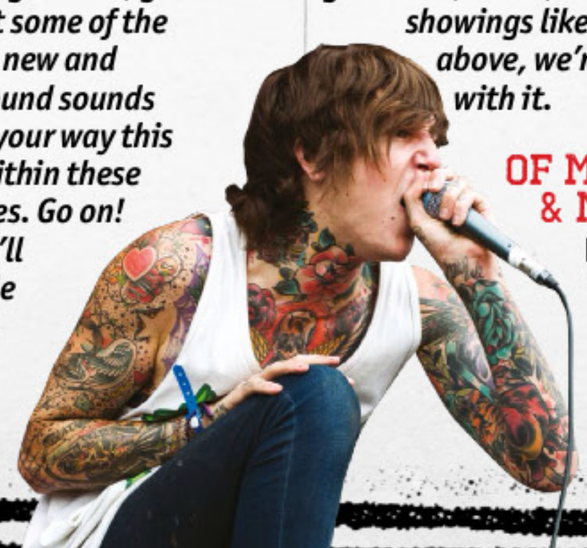
SPECIAL FORCES

Just wanted to say that it's been great reading the My Chemical Romance and nu metal specials, guys. I know a lot of people will bitch and moan that they're not Cradle Of Filth specials or what the fuck ever, but it's cool to see you branch out a bit. Plus, nu metal rules! Keep rollin' (rollin', rollin', rollin').
KYLE SUILAMAN, FACEBOOK

No worries, brother! Cheers for reading, and yes, sometimes it is nice to spread the ol' wings a bit. And besides, lest we forget, both My Chemical Romance and the nu metal revolution are a massive part of not just Hammer's history, but of rock music's DNA. Love it or hate it, you can't ignore it, right?

EQUALITY STREET

I found your online piece on black women in metal particularly interesting. It definitely seems like there are few black, female metal fans around, and I guess I never considered it an issue before!



Watain: leading an extreme metal wave

Here's hoping that book and documentary raises some important discussions.
KELLY LEA, EMAIL

Debate is our favourite thing to inspire here at* Hammer*, and yes, this is a doozy of an issue for sure. In fact, we found it such an inspiring story that we interviewed Laina, the author of the book in question, over on page 8! Go read it!

HELL YEAH!

Did my eyes deceive me or was that actually Stone Cold Steve fucking Austin talking about Iron Maiden and Saxon in your recent issue [December 2013]? Keep up the unexpected special guest appearances, *Hammer*! When can we expect to see The Rock talking about Iced Earth?
THE IMMORTAL DON, EMAIL

We're glad you liked Steve's Discs Of Doom. And yes, we'll have plenty more surprises up our sleeves in the coming months, although we reckon The Rock is more of a Dragonforce ma- [IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT THE ROCK LIKES – WWE Champ Ed].

TEAM EXTREME

Extreme metal is taking over the world again! Watain are the most exciting black metal band for two decades, Behemoth have just put out the best metal album of the last five years, Carcass have pulled off the best metal comeback ever and, best of all, Emperor are back and we have a new At The Fucking Gates album! Bring it on! Arghhhhhhh!!!
SAM WHEATON-COLES, FACEBOOK

We are so fucking down with all of these we can't even begin to tell you. Extreme music is as strong as ever, and the fact that the likes of Carcass and Emperor are mixing it up with the underground's modern heroes puts some fresh fire into our coal-black hearts. Lovely stuff.

COWBOY SONG

Amazing to see the mighty Cowboys From Hell – I am of course talking about Pantera – on the cover of your last issue [March 2014]. The greatest band of all time and Dimebag is still missed every single fucking day in this household. Keep defending the faith and keep the awesome covers coming. Cheers!
DAV JENKINS, FACEBOOK

Thank you for buying it and the feedback is much appreciated, mate. Although is there anyone out there who doesn't like Pantera? Almost certainly not. You'd have to be off your rocker. Have to be.

If you don't like Pantera, you're reading the wrong mag

TURN THAT FROWNLOAD UPSIDE-DOWNLOAD

I don't get why people are moaning about Download this year, I think the lineup's class. You have the current (Linkin Park), the young (Avenged Sevenfold) and the old (Aerosmith), plus loads of new bands and veteran legends like Status Quo! *Rocking All Over The World*, anyone? Anyone?
JOHN RICHARDSON, FACEBOOK

We're with you, dude. Front row, arms aloft, screaming our heads off for* Whatever You Want. *Fucking yes, mate.

CHAS'D OFF

Chas and Dave at Sonisphere. Chas and fucking Dave. Sorry, let me say that again. CHAS AND DAVE AT SONISPHERE! YOU FUCKING WHAT?
BRAD JENNINGS, FACEBOOK

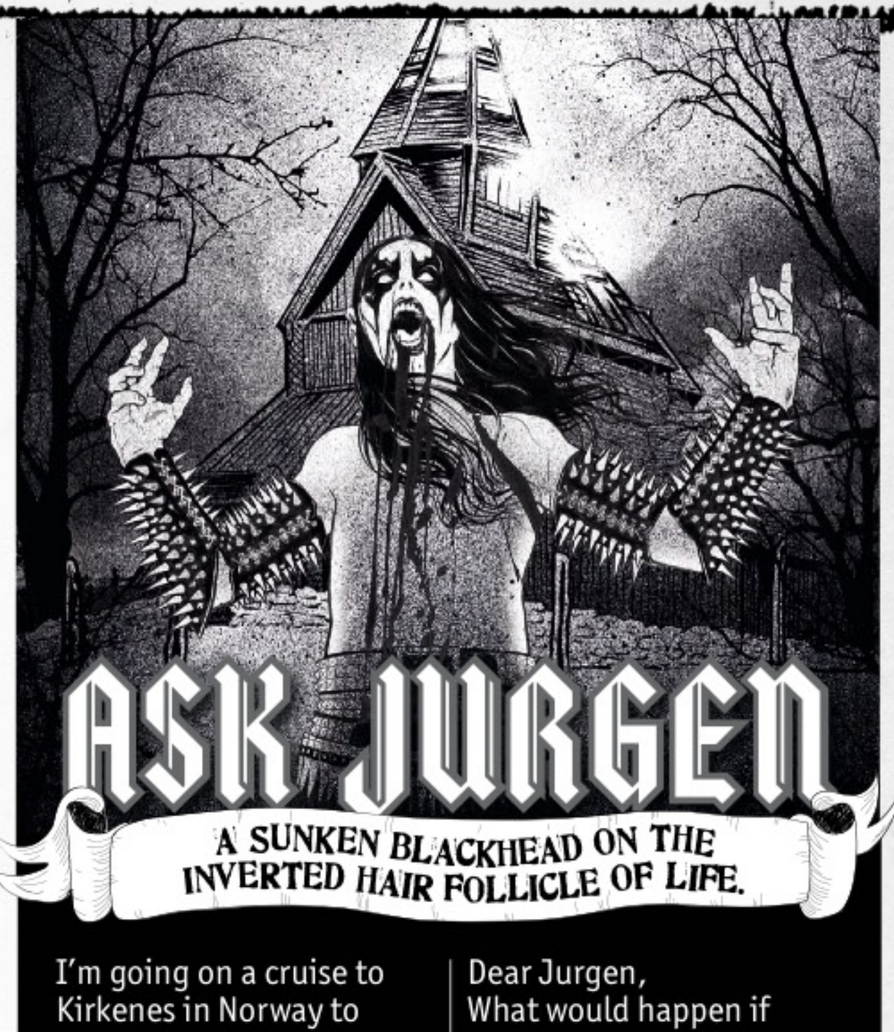
We thought that ABBA tribute a few years back was a bit of a weird one but this is plain nuts. Still, it'll be an... event.

THE DAY THAT NEVER COMES

Can everyone just get off Metallica's backs about getting on with that new album now? Here's some facts: they are the biggest metal band of all time and can do what they want. *Death Magnetic* was actually a perfectly good album on its own merit and needs way more respect that it gets from trolls and moaners. Finally, they're Metallica! They're better than you!
CARL HOY, FACEBOOK

We don't think anyone is in the position to tell Metallica what to do. Still, it has been* six years *now. Come on, lads!

Metallica: we wonder if Lang Lang will turn up at Sonisphere...



ASK JURGEN

A SUNKEN BLACKHEAD ON THE INVERTED HAIR FOLLICLE OF LIFE.

I'm going on a cruise to Kirkenes in Norway to see the Northern Lights. Can you recommend any good restaurants while I'm there?
WAVEY DAVEY, WEST HAMPSTEAD

Jurgen says: Silence, British arse-juggling eau-de-piss wearers! Coming over here with your "Ooh look at the green sky, isn't it simply marvellous?" with your GoPro cameras, Brian Cox Twitter-feeds, your BBC2 Stargazing *on iPlayer with Dara O'Briain and his unhilarious pieces-to-camera, your red trousers and "can we get a wake-up call if the lights appear at night, yeah", buying Melkesjokolade and little trolls for next door "because they always get us something" and those jumpers like her on* The Killing *wears not realising that is actually Danish and "we simply must go on a fjord cruise next time". AIIIIIIIIIIEEEEEEE!!!!!*

Dear Jurgen,
Who is the greatest band that ever was, is or ever shall be?
PETE CAYN

Jurgen says: The gayest band that ever was is a toss-up between Bronski Beat, The Communards, Erasure and Burzum. Which also happen to be Nils's four favourite bands ever. He owns their full discographies on vinyl. Just this morning he was in the front room with his record sleeves laid out on the floor. From upstairs, I could hear him furiously winding the handle of his antique gramophone player. Unfortunately, later on, all the record sleeves had to be put into the airing cupboard to dry off. They needed a good wipe clean; Nils accidentally chucked his porridge across them all.

Dear Jurgen,
What would happen if metal never existed?
ALFIE SHAYRIL

Jurgen says: Metal doesn't exist. Nor do you and neither do I. Considering that we are all composed of the same vibrating and inter-changing atomic structure, it's yet to be disproven that existence itself is a mass illusion and that 'being' – or our essence of 'being' – actually exists at all. Descartes wrote, "I think therefore I am" but this pre-supposes 'I' itself: the question is, what is 'I'? How can 'I' actually be proven? AIIIIIIIIIIEEEEEE!

Dear Jurgen,
Who do you love more: Satan or Ozzy?
NOTEBOOKSCRAWLA

Jurgen says: According to Dante Alighieri, Satan has three mouths. All three are constantly chewing on who were considered the top three sinners in 14th-century Italy: Brutus and Cassius (who both plotted Julius Caesar's assassination) and Judas. Conversely, Ozzy has one mouth (if you don't include Sharon and Kelly) which is constantly chewing on Fisherman's Friends. So the answer is: Dick & Dom.

Dear Jurgen,
Which is your favourite Power Ranger?
PETER WESTGARTH

Jurgen says: Henry Rollins.

Dear Jurgen
I am bedridden and the only view I can enjoy is seeing weddings at the chapel opposite my care home. However, this view has become obscured by creeping ivy. Suggestions?
JOHNNY METALFACE

Jurgen says: Burn down the church.

TWITTER.COM/JURGENTOKSVIG

REVELATIONS

THIS MONTH'S HOTTEST METAL NEWS

HOW BLACK IS METAL?

Laina Dawes is black, female and a metalhead. In her new book, she lifts the lid on discrimination in our genre, painting it in a whole new light.

We all like to think of metal as a brotherhood; a tribe of likeminded souls that have bonded over the intoxicating power of loud guitars and bloodcurdling screams. "We aren't like other genres," we proclaim. "This is for anyone and everyone. A genre and a culture for all-comers." Just how true is this in reality, though? Let's be honest here: for many a time, metal seemed to be the domain solely of white, Western males. And although the huge strides made in recent years in the Indian and South American metal scenes suggest some stereotypes are being broken down, it's a perception that has been difficult for our scene to shake.

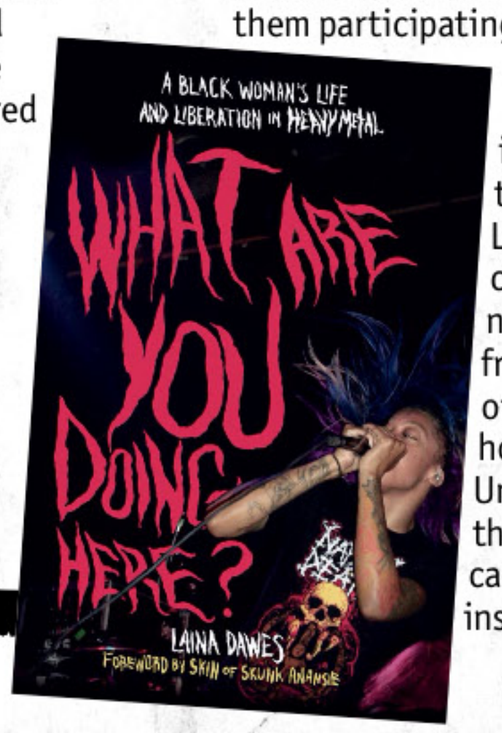
Laina Dawes knows from first-hand experience what it is like to stand out from the crowd. A photographer, journalist and dyed-in-the-wool metalhead, she is the author of the book *What Are You Doing Here?*, a fascinating account of her experiences as a black, female metal fan. For those who preach tolerance, or those that have simply never considered race and gender politics within the metal scene, it's quite an eye-opener.

"The idea of the book came about when I moved from my small town, where I had a lot of white friends that I would talk to about Judas Priest and all the metal bands, to the big city," she explains. "As I got older I started to wonder why the scene was so segregated. I didn't understand why I was the only black person there. So that was one side of it, and the other was that I also write about race and ethnicity as part of my living, and I wanted to do something where I could incorporate my two biggest passions. Namely, music and talking about race and identity.

"The other thing was that I looked around the scene for role models and saw Skin from Skunk Anansie – this is back in the mid-90s – and saw how aggressive she was and how sexy she was," she continues. "That inspired me to try to push through the idea that a black female can change the perception of a movement, culturally."

For Laina, seeing a role model like that onstage led her to contemplate the lack of similar individuals offstage. "I was part of the scene and saw bands like Rage Against The Machine and Fishbone," she recalls. "But those people were up on the stage. You have to look in the audience. Who are you seeing in there? It's primarily white folks. So, as an observer, it was odd to me to feel like I was the only one out there. You have to understand that, just because you haven't noticed something, doesn't mean there isn't a problem. And after four years of speaking to people I think that, it may not be a, quote unquote, 'problem', but there is a definite hindrance and obstacles put in front of black women that aren't there for black men that stops them actively participating as musicians and actively stops them participating as fans."

"I'VE HAD PEOPLE BE OUTRAGED THAT I SHOW UP TO GIGS"



It would, of course, be the ideal scenario to hear that Laina's book was credited with no negative impacts from the members of the scene we hold dear. Unfortunately, that is not the case; the title is inspired by the phrase she has heard on all too frequent an occasion while attending metal shows. For most decent-minded fans, and Laina herself maintains that is still the majority, some of her experiences are disturbing and angering in equal measure. "I don't get it too much any more," she shrugs. "But I get it more in shows. I've had people come up to me at shows and just be outraged that I even show my face there. But I can take care of myself in person. Online? That's different. There's no justification for some of the things I've read and it is deeply alienating to many young women. I'm lucky I'm older and I am not fazed by these things. But to a young girl reading that, it will just hinder them even further."

Despite those experiences, Laina Dawes is still here, and is exactly the sort of person metal should be celebrating: a genuine lover of the music and someone committed to pushing its boundaries ever wider.

"My book is not about attributing blame, it's about encouraging and empowering black women to become more involved. That's the only way things are going to change, through active participation." ✠

***WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? A BLACK WOMAN'S LIFE AND LIBERATION IN HEAVY METAL* IS OUT NOW VIA BAZILLION POINTS**

10 MÖTLEY CRÜE

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19 JAGGED VISION

HOT TOPIC

Singers like Toronto, Canada's Saidah Baba Talibah are a rare breed

Laina wants to expose the difficulties faced by black women in metal

VOXY LADY

METAL SINGER MILITIA VOX IS ONE OF THE SUBJECTS OF *WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?*

"As a black female singer, I can tell you that the standards that the industry holds frontwomen to is a different ballgame, and the standards that the industry holds *black* women to are even worse. Many people don't like to talk about or 'fess up to these things, and there's probably a lot of people who just never considered this to be a reality. This is why Laina's book is important. It shines a light on a subject that hasn't had a voice in the media before. It gives black women rockers such as myself a platform to speak and share our experiences."

HOT TOPIC

The press conference was a grave affair

STEPHANIE CABRAL

The ceremonial contract-signing

Alice Cooper hosted the press conference; he'll also support their tour

MÖTLEY NO MORE

The Crüe bow out, but as Nikki Sixx explains, they're doing it in style.

After 30-plus years, mountains of drugs, endless women, a fuckton of pyro, prison sentences and some of the most recognisable anthems in rock'n'roll history, all it took to finally kill the legendary Mötley Crüe was four signatures on a piece of paper.

After much speculation, Nikki Sixx, Vince Neil, Tommy Lee and Mick Mars signed away their livelihood on a legally binding contract that prohibits the four men from ever playing together again, save for one last jaunt around the globe on their farewell tour. Many in attendance at the typically Crüe-esque glitz of the press conference audibly gasped at the sight of these legends hanging up their Spandex once and for all, so how did it feel for the band themselves?

"I felt fine. I just signed it. Some people couldn't believe it but... there you go!" shrugs Nikki Sixx with a big grin. "It wasn't until I got home and, when all the hype and ceremony had died down and I could be quiet, that I went out into my back yard and just looked up at the stars and just contemplated everything. I thought about my mom and dad and my grandparents, who were such a support to me growing up, and realised that these guys, my bandmates, they are the people I've known most in my whole life. And I just started to laugh out loud, a real thigh-slapping, throaty laugh, and shouted 'We did it!' because we *have* done it! No one ever gave this band a chance, but we're all still here and we're going to go out on top."

But what prompted the unusual decision to legally bind the veterans from ever playing together again? Respect for the fans, it seems...

"Well, we were going to hire a private jet and drive it into a mountain but we couldn't get a pilot," laughs Nikki. "Listen, we've been cheated, as fans, by so many of our favourite bands over the years. How many of versions The Doors are still taking people's money? The Doors ceased to exist the day Jim Morrison died. We don't want to be touring 'Nikki Sixx's Mötley Crüe' with a bunch of hired hands. That will never happen, and this way, it legally can't. We don't rip our fans off."

So this isn't a publicity stunt, then? "No, we've had lawyers go through the contract with a fine-tooth comb," replies Nikki. "There is no break clause. Well, this will never happen anyway, but we've said that if we ever get inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, then we can play a couple of tunes. Apart from that, it's over.

"We always were at the start of something, it's nice now to be at the end. I can't think of a single band that've done it our way." ✠

MÖTLEY CRÜE WILL ANNOUNCE WORLDWIDE TOUR DATES SOON

"WE'RE GOING OUT ON TOP"

Larking about backstage. Enjoy it while it lasts...

MARE-ING TO GO

HOT NEW BAND

✠ *Ethereal rockers Black Mare are giving Sera Timms a new lease of life.*

This year will see the release of Black Mare's *Field Of The Host*, the bewitching debut from singer-songwriter Sera Timms, best known as the frontwoman of Ides Of Gemini and the now-defunct Black Math Horseman. For the raven-haired siren, the desire for a project where she had total creative control had been brewing for a while, as her time in Black Math Horseman was mostly spent playing bass and collaborating with bandmates Ian Barry and Bryan Tulao.

"I didn't really have time to work on my own stuff," explains Sera. "I had bits and pieces of songs for a long time, and then my best friend had the idea to do a Winter Solstice ritual which she suggested that I write a song for. That was the first song I wrote as Black Mare. It was all a process, kind of like getting assignments. It was pretty liberating to take back my own songs. I always wanted to do something like this, but couldn't conceive of how it was going to happen. It always seemed too overwhelming to me, so I always ended up collaborating instead."

The resulting album is much less cerebral and more emotional than Sera's previous musical projects. According to her, this is down to a more intimate writing process: "I write everything in a room by myself. It's more innocent and pure, and it's much rawer; everything just flows out. I haven't tried to make anything grand. As you get older, with creativity there's a tendency to over-intellectualise things and when you do that it involves the ego, and the ego makes impure creation."

Musically, the album is ethereal yet heavy, somewhat comparable to Chelsea Wolfe's latest, with a pervasive haunting quality that comes from Sera's voice. It's refreshing to hear another female singer who's not interested in simply making the prettiest sound possible.

"It's so funny because there's a part of me that wishes I *could* do that sort of thing, but I don't think I'm capable," she says. "Whatever comes out of me always seems to be dark and heavy! You always want to be the thing that you're not, but it feels best to be true to yourself. That's a universal truth."

With Black Mare now her main project, Sera's hope is to tour with a bigger band now the album is released, but she won't reveal which one.

"I feel like that's when you make your birthday wish and if you tell anyone it won't come true!" she says, giggling. In the meantime, she's already working on new material, and is happy with how things are going. "Collaborating is amazing," she says, "but to not have to collaborate? Also amazing." ✠

***FIELD OF THE HOST* IS OUT NOW VIA THE CROSSING**

"EGOS MAKE IMPURE CREATIONS"

Sera: striking out on her own

WELCOME BACK

Gus G's first solo album is surprisingly collaborative

"THIS ISN'T GUITAR WANKERY"

Guitar god Gus G opens up on his first ever solo album.

Gus G certainly likes to keep busy. Between touring with Firewind and Ozzy Osbourne, the guitarist somehow found the time to make his first solo record, *I Am The Fire*. The album was born out of a collaboration with Candlemass vocalist Mats Levén while on a tour break, after the Swedish singer had previously filled in for ex-Firewind frontman Apollo Papathanasio in 2011.

"I had a few riffs and song ideas I'd written on the road," the axe maestro explains. "I wanted to keep working with Mats, so I sent them to him. The songs he did were really good, but wouldn't fit on a Firewind record."

There was only one thing for it… except the idea of a solo album had never appealed to Gus before. Until, that is, he realised that he could use it to showcase another side to his playing. "I've always been happy to be just a band guy," he muses. "But everyone had been asking me to do [a solo album] for a while, so now that I had a few ideas I thought, 'Why not?' The main question was, what kind of album did I want to make? I definitely didn't want this to be a guitar-wankery album! Making a solo album should be about taking the liberty to play whatever the hell you want, so there are acoustic tracks, as well as more radio-friendly stuff."

Musically, the album has Gus rediscovering his classic rock roots, inspired by touring with the Prince Of Darkness. "Playing with Ozzy brought out that side of me," he says. "I wanted to play more like that on my album; with my own sound, which is heavier and more modern, but with an old-school vibe."

On his decision to use guest musicians rather than a band, he notes: "I thought, 'If I'm going to change the game, I may as well change it completely.'" And the list of guests on the record is impressive, including Daniel Erlandsson (Arch Enemy), Tom Englund (Evergrey) and Michael Starr (Steel Panther).

The writing was collaborative, with Gus coming up with songtitles and either co-writing or letting his guest singers write their own lyrics. The result is an album that's personal for all involved. "I connected with what they wrote, as I was going through a pretty dark period at that time," Gus admits. "But writing the album was cathartic for me."

Gus is keen to get on the road for *I Am The Fire*. "There's no chance I wouldn't tour this album," he says. "You can't be in this business if you don't like playing for your fans, and I love that." ✠

"I'M CHANGING THE GAME COMPLETELY"

***I AM THE FIRE* IS OUT MARCH 17 VIA CENTURY MEDIA**

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www.steelpantherrocks.com

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Entropy
One of the most promising metal bands to emerge last year.
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A hellraising performance from the Mitch Lucker tribute show.
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7) BURY TOMORROW
Watcher
It's going to be a *big* year for these UK metalcore titans.
www.facebook.com/burytomorrow

8) LACUNA COIL
Nothing Stands In Our Way
Italy's finest still know how to please the metal masses.
www.lacunacoil.it

9) BUTCHER BABIES
Magnolia Blvd
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www.facebook.com/butcherbabiesmusic

10) THIS IS TURIN
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11) ANIMUS
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Eight-string guitars, weird time signatures and a whole lotta groove.
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12) WRAITHS
Hellride
Hell metal for demons, apparently.
www.facebook.com/wraithshc

13) SENTENCED
Ways Of The Wicked
One for the death metal diehards.
www.sentenceduk.bandcamp.com

14) FAILURE TO FOLLOW
Given Up
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www.facebook.com/failuretofollow

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ROCKY ROAD

Genre-mashing Italian stallions Destrage are bold, brilliant and fucking bonkers.

Destrage: a little bit of this, a little bit of that...

Let's be honest: in the year 2014, more than 40 years into metal's existence, it isn't exactly easy to be surprised by a band. Sure, you can get endless thrills from a re-jigging of that initial blueprint, but to sound original and unique? Not so simple. Not simple, but possible.

"All my life I've had way more fun saying 'yes' than 'no'," says Destrage guitarist Matteo Di Gioia. "We try to incorporate that feeling within this band. A lot of bands try to put boundaries on themselves and say 'no', but we're more interested in exploring those ideas that come from outside our comfort zone and going with them, even if they feel uncomfortable. We refuse to suppress ourselves."

'Uncomfortable' is one of many reactions you might have when you listen to Destrage's new album, *Are You Kidding Me? No!* It's a mindblowing collection of just about every single conceivable genre of music crammed into every moment of its 10 tracks. And while it often gives whiffs of everyone from The Dillinger Escape Plan to Jane's Addiction via Sikth, Ephel Duath, Devin Townsend, System Of A Down and Faith No More, it only ever really sounds like Destrage. So what sort of music *is it*?

"Honestly," Matteo shrugs, "we don't know ourselves. We don't know if we fit into a precise genre, but if someone could find a name for what we do, then we'd be pretty happy!"

Unfortunately, it's as much of a challenge to place them as it is to comprehend their music, so we'll skip that one. Instead it may be easier trying to work out where the sound of Destrage comes from. Is it in the not-so-renowned underground of the Italian metal scene?

"There is no heritage in this territory," drummer Federico Paulovich responds. "We aren't from New York or Seattle so we don't have that weight of expectation. We can't look around and get inspiration from our scene. It's all new at the moment, we didn't inherit it. It all has to come from us."

If you've got the idea in your head that this makes Destrage sound like just another ultra-technical metal band, showing off their skills in an orgy of widdling guitar porn, then don't be fooled. Another thing that sets them apart from the pack is their primary concern for writing catchy tunes. "We want people to come to shows and have fun," claims Matteo. "Not to stand there and take notes. We want to be layered and complex, sure, but we want people to jump and get sweaty, too."

Destrage obviously want it all. They might just get it, too. ✠

***ARE YOU KIDDING ME? NO!* IS OUT MARCH 4 VIA METAL BLADE**

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WHY I LOVE...

CARCASS

BY ADAM DUTKIEWICZ / KILLSWITCH ENGAGE

IT'S NO SECRET THAT KILLSWITCH ENGAGE LOVE A BIT OF DEATH METAL; HERE'S ADAM D's ODE TO CARCASS.

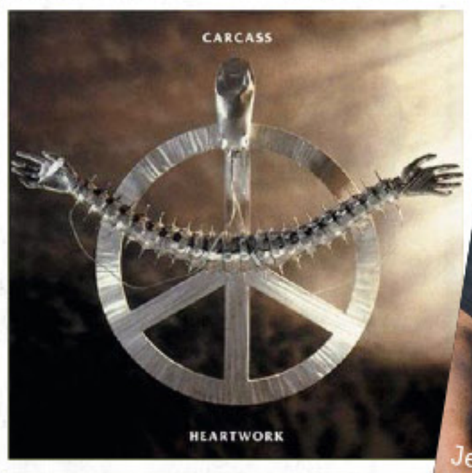
WORDS: DAYAL PATTERSON ILLUSTRATION: MATT DIXON

THEY'RE TRULY UNIQUE

"For me personally, the band's appeal lies in the uniqueness of their sound. There are a lot of bands that have elements of what they do, but there's just something in their music that means you can always tell it's Carcass. Maybe it's Bill Steer's guitar parts... maybe it's Jeff's vocals... but you always know it's *them*, there's something truly unique about that band. The riffs and the way they write the songs is their own thing, the guitar solos as well."

THEY'RE CONSISTENT

"Carcass are a band where choosing a favourite song is really, really hard. For me, it might be *Inpropagation* or *Incarnated Solvent Abuse* from *Necroticism – Descanting The Insalubrious* and the reason for this would be because of the riffs – really, *really* memorable parts and heavy as crap. And then from *Heartwork*, well that would be the hardest to choose – it could be the first two songs – *Buried Dreams* and *Carnal Forge* – but really you could just play the whole album, there's not a bad song on it!"



HEARTWORK IS A CLASSIC ALBUM

"I wasn't really aware of Carcass before *Heartwork* but my friend played it to me when it was released back in 1993 and I was completely blown away by it. Again, because of the riffs, mostly, but also because of the sonic characteristics of that record: I couldn't believe how the guitar tone sounded, I was like, 'Are you *kidding* me, what is this?!' *Heartwork* is their magnum opus, if someone can't get into that, then I don't know what the hell is wrong with them. I would say it is definitely in the top five death metal albums of all time. And from one of my favourite metal bands of all time."

Jeff Walker: one of many reasons why Carcass sound so distinctive

Carcass: back, and as bloody brilliant as before

BOTH GUITARISTS ARE MAESTROS

"I'm in love with the way they layer things, the two guitar parts just complement all the rhythms. Listen to a song like *Carnal Forge*; after the guitar solos you have this guitar riff with these two parts that sort of swim around each other, and it's the heaviest thing I've ever heard. It's like, 'We have two guitar players, let's make use of that, rather than have both guys hanging out on one riff.' They make use of the instruments and have complementing leads, with layers thrown on top making it sound even larger than life."

THEY HAVE NOT MISSED A BEAT

"I picked up the new album and it sounds great. It has the cool melodic guitar parts that made *Heartwork* such a great record. We actually played with them on their reunion tour several years back. It was awesome to be able to see that; in fact, At The Gates had got back together as well, so it was like a two-for-one that night. I remember Carcass got up there and played a great set, but I guess I was so smitten by the band that they could have played a *terrible* show and I would have had a great time. I was just stoked to see them!"

THEY'RE INSPIRATIONAL

"Carcass definitely inspired my playing when it comes to creating riffs and playing guitar, though it's almost a subconscious thing. I never tried to bite someone or steal other people's parts, so someone else might be better placed to spot where they've had an influence! They were definitely that band that pioneered a lot of that guitar duelling and a lot of the stuff I picked up on, the harmonic work for example." ✠

KILLSWITCH ENGAGE PLAY DOWNLOAD IN JUNE. CARCASS PLAY BLOODSTOCK IN AUGUST

Alaya's debut album is finally here!

WELCOME BACK

PROGRESSIVE PERFECTORS

Are Alaya the band to take tech metal to the next level?

Such is the speed of life in this age of technological advance and frenzied global communication that sometimes it's hard to not think wistfully back to a time when music arrived in our lives at a more restrained pace. In that sense, perhaps, it is particularly refreshing to witness the arrival of Alaya.

"At one point we joked, 'Is this even going to come out?'" laughs singer and guitarist Evan Dunn of the Chicago crew's long, long, *long*-awaited debut album, *Thrones*. "It's been *forever*, I know. I think what happened was that we decided it would take a specific amount of time to finish and we got the ball rolling. We put the *Inside* video out, expecting the album to be done soon after, but it just wasn't. We wrote the last two songs and started mixing and then I couldn't let it go! Everything had to be perfect – I got a little OCD on it."

Alaya's music has taken a long time to reach our ears but it has generated its own hype along the way, the tech metal community's dense online network embracing the band with alacrity – and with good reason. In stark contrast to most of their post-djent peers, Alaya have struck upon an irresistible formula; more than enough polyrhythmic audacity to placate Periphery fans, but with *tunes*. Massive, instantly memorable, gloriously uplifting tunes that ooze humanity and soul in a way that most purposefully intricate heavy music seldom even attempts.

"It just happened that way," shrugs Evan of the key to their crossover-friendly sound. "I think it's just because we've spent so much time playing instrumentally. We know our limits. We're not capable of playing the extreme tech metal stuff, so when you pull it back a little from that crazy technical place, it's all just *there*."

It is one of many factors that could well turn Alaya from humble guys enjoying an unexpected underground buzz into one of the most celebrated new metal bands of the decade. Better still, the childish impatience and lack of self-awareness that undermine so many bands' first forays into the wider world are simply not an issue here – *Thrones* is very much the finished article.

"We are definitely the kind of people who don't count chickens before they hatch!" chuckles Evan of keeping their heads at such a crucial point in their young career. "This is such an amazing opportunity. We've only been able to dream about doing stuff like this, so now it's happening we know it's gonna be a blast. All we ever wanted was a chance. Being in a band should be fun, and this is definitely that." ✠

***THRONES* IS OUT MARCH 17 VIA BASICK**

"EVERYTHING HAD TO BE PERFECT"

SEEN LEADERS

Jagged Vision: breaking through

Consider them upbeat eco-lyricists

HOT NEW BAND ✠

They play scintillating sludge mashed with heavy hardcore and come Kylesa-approved. Jagged Vision, you're doing it right.

As vocalist Ole Wik puts it: "Things have gone from zero to a hundred, really quickly."

That's because a few short months ago, the Jagged Vision frontman and his bandmates – drummer Joakim Svela, bassist Kato Austrått and guitarists Harald Lid and Daniel Vier – were languishing in obscurity. Oh, sure, there was the occasional unearthing of their off-kilter brand of upbeat stoner rock/sludge core in and around the venues of western Norway, and you might even have seen someone strolling the streets of Stavanger decked out in one of their shirts, but it's not like they were on the lips of many more folks beyond that. Until, as Wik explains, Daniel met Kylesa's Phillip Cope.

"Daniel was a roadie for Kvelertak on their first international tour which was with Converge and Kylesa. From there, he got to know Phil." Dan and Phil got along and Jagged Vision were looking for a producer to record their debut full-length, so a plan was hatched for the band to trek from Stavanger to Columbia, South Carolina and record at the Jam Room, the studio where the Kylesa man works when he's not on tour. It was after spending two weeks in Columbia that Phil approached the quintet with the idea of signing to Retro Futurist, the boutique label he was assembling with fellow Kylesa-ians Laura Pleasants and Carl McGinley.

"I CAN'T THINK OF A BAND THAT SOUNDS LIKE US"

"At the time, we didn't even know he was planning to start a label!" exclaims Wik.

The result is *Harvest Earth*, the release of which was preceded by a month-long European tour featuring Jagged Vision and fellow Retro Futurist act Sierra, supporting Kylesa. Not bad for a band who started playing "simplistic hardcore punk" and only got into "stoner, doom and Black Sabbath when [they] got older".

"That scene is really small here," adds Daniel. "The band Purified In Blood are awesome and have been around forever, but it's mainly just a group of long-haired dudes hanging around listening to loud music, so we've always looked to the UK and US for inspiration."

The combination of the members' hardcore roots and recent obsession with all things bearded, bare-chested and bong-watered gives *Harvest Earth* a unique edge as socially conscious shouting meets clipped 'n' crunchy power chord progressions and boogie blues.

"Coming from a hardcore punk background, our lyrics will always have meaning. *Harvest Earth* is about how humanity exploits everything and us being five clueless dudes who feel we don't fit in," Wik laughs. "Going from hardcore to what we do now, we approached our music with a different mindset. The outcome is different and I can't really put a finger on a band that sounds like us. I'm not even sure if what we do would be considered stoner or doom!" ✠

***HARVEST EARTH* IS OUT NOW VIA RETRO FUTURIST**

CULT OF PERSONALITY

Prepare for Servers' Mastodon-meets-Queens brand of intelligent riffing.

We'd all like to live Tommy Lee's 80s lifestyle. Get up at noon, do some drugs, have sex, grab a bowl of Coco Pops, more drugs, more sex, play a show, and then party for the rest of the night (no doubt including plenty of drugs and sex). It's the sort of lifestyle former GU Medicine frontman Lee Storrar used to sing about.

"I used to find it easy to write songs about sex, drugs, women, booze, and all that sort of stuff, but I knew there was a good album in me not about those issues," says Lee.

With his new band Servers, Lee has taken a radical departure from the rock'n'roll clichés of yesteryear. The band's debut album, *Leave With Us*, released on the resurrected Undergroove label, is an ambitious mix of Mastodon at their most melodic and the stoner groove of Queens Of The Stone Age. Plus, like all the best songs, there is a dark undercurrent running through the band's music.

"I became engrossed in reading about cult leaders and the pathological narcissism that they know all the answers," enthuses Lee. "It takes a good follower to make a good leader and I've been fascinated by the back stories; the weak, the weird and the emotionally unstable that have been exploited."

It's a theme that runs throughout the album, and Lee explores even darker subject matter than those cheeky church-burning Satanists running around Norway that we're used to hearing about.

"Metal bands are obsessed with Satanism," notes the singer. "They're into their magic spells, but the Manson family caused social upset and racism. [Satanists] are pussy cats compared to that!"

This fascination with cults encompasses the band as a whole, but they aren't going to be flicking through *The Yellow Pages* looking for local face-painters to transform them into Papa Emeritus. They are looking for a more subtle way of spreading their dark tales.

"We just want to be understated and sing about darker issues," stresses Lee.

This earnest exploration of the evils human beings are capable of delivered in the form of progressive yet accessible metal is sure to convert many people to the cult of Servers. ✠

The evil that men do inspires Servers

"MANSON MADE SATANISTS LOOK LIKE PUSSY CATS!"

***LEAVE WITH US* IS OUT NOW VIA UNDERGROOVE**

DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH

METAL'S MODERN-DAY CRUSADERS

JOEL DOMMETT
COMEDIAN/IMPRACTICAL JOKER

Star of BBC Three's LOLs-a-minute show *Impractical Jokers*, comic Joel Dommett is already a familiar face to many, but it is his love of heavy riffage that has got us lot grinning like idiots.

"I was obsessed with two things," he explains of his entrance to the heavy stuff. "Tae Kwon Do and nu metal." The latter led to him attempting a different career path that, while unfruitful, provided some amusing anecdotes. "I was in a band called Psiris with a silent 'P'," Joel explains. "Our first gig was at Rockhampton Cricket Pavilion. We'd written various angsty nu metal songs with titles such as *Albino Black Sheep*. Angsty. And we all know nothing is more rock'n'roll than a cricket pavilion..."

Joel still holds a lot of love for his nu metal past, even if his tastes has been drawn towards heavier, more current sounds in recent years. Beyond all that, though, what we really want to know is this: When can we expect to see Fred Durst playing pranks on BBC Three? Imagine the scenes. Catch Joel on his stand-up tour across the UK this and next month.

FIRING RANGE
WHAT THE INDUSTRY'S SETTING ITS SIGHTS ON...

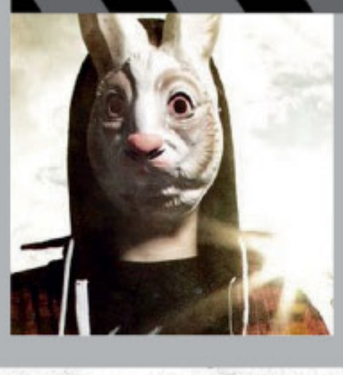
SHADE EMPIRE

SAHIL MAKHIJA
DEMONSTEALER RECORDS
"Their album, *Omega Arcade*, has really pushed the boundaries of symphonic metal."

'68

ANDY BAYLEY
SPINEFARM RECORDS
"The Chariot meets Death From Above 1979. Big, fuzzy riffs to a backdrop of 'Fuck you!'"

THE MIRE



LEANDER GLOVERSMITH
INCEPTION PRESS
"Brightonians with gargantuan riffs so mean they'll probably steal your dinner money."

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Centiment: a long time coming for guitarist Greg

CENTIMENT BEINGS

They may be three-fifths InMe, but Centiment are a wholly different beast.

The first thing that will probably strike you about Essex electronica-spliced technical metallers Centiment is the familiarity of their personnel. Featuring three members of anthemic rockers InMe, the quintet have something of a pedigree, albeit one they are keen not to be defined by.

"I write all InMe's music, but this is my brother Greg's project and something totally different," says Dave McPherson, who provides vocals for both bands. Greg, who wields a bass in InMe, has long had a penchant for the heavier end of the musical spectrum and is finally getting a chance to shine as a hard-riffing guitarist and chief creative force.

"Centiment has been a project for about 12 years or so," Dave tells us. "Greg has been writing and demoing songs for the longest time, since before InMe was a thing, even. It's always just been a hobby up until about 12 months ago, but eventually he got a lineup together that has stuck."

That Greg's style is so different to his brother's is not lost on the frontman.

"The things my brother writes are always darker and more complex than what I do – the pain for me is just being able to sing over it! Some of this stuff is definitely pretty challenging."

It's a challenge that Dave is particularly keen to get his teeth into, though. "We're really excited to get out on tour and show people what we can do, that is the point that Centiment truly becomes a proper band and its own entity," enthuses the singer.

"We're all obsessed with music really," he laughs "and this is just about expressing ourselves in another way." ✠

"THIS IS DARKER THAN INME"

STREETS OF RAGE IS OUT NOW VIA PLEDGE MUSIC

SANDS OF TIME

Seattle crew Sandrider are here to rock, roll and spill beer.

Straddling a sound that veers from grungy noise to stoner rock and all-out rock'n'roll riffisms, Seattle's Sandrider are the result of a thriving, self-serving music community.

"The Seattle music scene was exploding when I first was learning to play an instrument, so right out the gate I felt I had some form of identity," explains frontman Jon Weisnewski. "By the time I was a teenager playing all-ages shows, there was a thriving local scene where young bands got to play."

Luckily for us, the trio have made waves well outside of their homeland – though expect a less-than relaxing experience at one of their gigs.

"Our gigs are real loud," adds Jon. "You'll get beer spilled on you. You'll be on the fence about going and asking for earplugs, but the drummer will keep doing crazy shit. It's somewhat hypnotising." Sounds fun! ✠

***GODHEAD* IS OUT NOW VIA GOOD TO DIE**

HOARD ALMIGHTY
GIFTS OF THE GODS

ICED EARTH
PLAGUES OF BABYLON DELUXE BOX SET
| CENTURY MEDIA |

Given their propensity for epic statements, it should come as no surprise that Iced Earth have really gone to town on the special box set edition of their 11th studio album, the grandiloquent zombie extravaganza *Plagues Of Babylon*. Housed in a glossy and robust presentation box, this could well be the Americans' attempt at providing fans with a survival kit in advance of some impending invasion of the undead, although quite how useful the six double-sided art postcards would be when defending yourself from the grasping claws of a slavering ghoul is open to debate. A lavish hardback slipcase version of the album itself is the real gem here, coming as it does with a full colour "mediabook" including a bonus DVD featuring a documentary, a 5.1 surround sound version of *Plagues...* and two distinct stereo versions of the same (mastered for CD and vinyl respectively). But diehard fans will also be delighted by the inclusion of an Iced Earth bandana (perfect for doing impressions of guitarist Jon Schaffer), an embroidered sweatband, a fridge magnet adorned with the album's rather splendid cover art and, most pleasingly, an engraved Iced Earth hip flask: because, let's face it, when the zombies are banging on your door and demanding brains, you are fairly likely to be in the mood for a stiff drink.

HTTP://TINYURL.COM/KBZAJR3

UNHOLY DESIRES
THE ROAD TO HELL IS PAVED WITH AWESOME

CUSTOM MYTHOS ART DILDO
NECRONOMICOX

Everyone knows that power is an aphrodisiac, and there a few beings more powerful than the multi-dimensional, and pleasingly textured, Lovecraftian beings that rule our galaxy from beyond the realms of time. Their portals to and from our physical plane are the stuff of arcane speculation, but let's just say that some of them are in rather intimate locations.

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A DAY IN R'LYEH WALLPAPER
SPOONFLOWER

Communing with The Great Old Ones is daunting, so just lie back and think of R'lyeh. No mortal has described the sunken resting place of said beings without going mad, so let this wallpaper offer some guidance. Featuring your overlord and master, along with his courtiers in fine, Victorian-style attire, it offers a prim counterbalance to whatever you're doing at the time.

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MARSHALL STANMORE
MARSHALL

There are many bluetooth speakers in this world, but only one of them is based on a Marshall Amp. Available in black or cream, this impressive beast comes with various inputs – although the Bluetooth works like a charm – and its leather and brass stylings an outward indication of the crisp, quality sound that comes into its own when you turn the volume up.

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CHARLES DARWIN T-SHIRT
HELL ADORNED

Been a while since your last mass? You're not alone! Hell Adorned Apparel are here to help defend the (lack of) faith. Featuring the likes Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins and Charles Darwin looking more Satanic than Count Grisnackh at the funeral of Anton LaVey's black cat (RIP Fang), these shirts were made for one purpose: to piss off every bible-basher you walk past.

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Metalheads understand the dual nature of existence: channelling the warrior within while maintaining the finer arts of data input. Not only does this hand-made, anodised aluminium piece of apparel merge the two worlds and prove your indomitable prowess in the cutthroat territories of the cubicle, it also provides invaluable protection from pinged rubber bands.

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16TH JUNE 2014

WE'RE GOING BACK IN TIME...
TO SAVE THE FUTURE

METAL HAMMER
GOLDEN GOD AWARDS

THE WAY WE SEE IT, IF YOU'RE GONNA THROW A PARTY, WHY NOT DO IT IN STYLE?

METAL HAMMER WORLD

BEHOLD OUR EMPIRE

Cycle to Donington? On yer bike, mate!

Paolo: a determined Truant

PEDAL TO THE METAL!

Heavy Metal Truants returns for another charity ride to Download!

It was one of the biggest success stories in the metal calendar last year, and it's back and bigger than ever. Heavy Metal Truants will be getting down to the business of a 161-mile charity bike ride from London's Alexandra Palace all the way to Donington for Download Festival 2014 – and you can be part of it!

Last year the motley crew making the journey up to metal's hallowed grounds included Trivium bassist Paolo Gregoletto, Perry from Pendulum, Tesseract's James Monteith, Ben Jolliffe from Young Guns, Nick Holmes from Paradise Lost and Iron Maiden manager Rod Smallwood. "Metal fans like to get up off their back-sides and do things; it's a very proactive tribe," says Rod. "Last year's ride to Donington was a lot of fun and it raised a lot of money for kids in need, but they still need our help, and this is a great way to do that with an interesting and varied bunch of riders. It's totally metal in that we're all in it together, rough and smooth, whether you're a fan, band-member, journalist, editor, manager or involved in the metal music biz. We ride together, eat together and drink together. It's a blast. Check it out and do some good for other people, too. If you have the heart and soul and liver, join us."

Tired and happy Truants at last year's Download

Alexander and Rod out in Cambodia for their last Truants charity ride

This year will once again see some special names join the fun – not to mention representatives from our parent company and Truants sponsor TeamRock, and *Metal Hammer* Editor-In-Chief Alexander Milas. "Rod and I were out in Cambodia for one of his Truants rides, and we said, 'Why not do it again?'" explains Alexander. "Metal has always been about community. The chance to take to the road with a bunch of likeminded goons and raise money for kids is a one-of-a-kind adventure. The ride is hard and the days are long, but it's an experience you'll never forget."

The ride sets off on Wednesday June 11 from Alexandra Palace and will finish around midday on the Friday in time for the start of Download. Entrants are asked to contribute an entry price of a minimum of £250 towards the costs (which are actually around £550 per head), which covers everything except for your beers. Tickets for Download are not included but on arrival you do get to spend all day Friday in the *Metal Hammer* tent backstage and wander off to see any bands you want and maybe even get a pint or two of Trooper. You must also pledge to raise or pay a further minimum of £1,300 for three very noble causes – Childline, Teenage Cancer Trust and Nordoff Robbins, and once your target is met, all that's left is to get training and get ready for the ride of a lifetime! On yer bikes!

"METAL FANS LIKE TO GET OFF THEIR BACKSIDES!"

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE HEAVY METAL TRUANTS AND THE DOWNLOAD CHARITY BIKE RIDE, HEAD TO WWW.HEAVYMETALTRUANTS.COM

MONSTER MASH

Monster Truck get ready to kick off Lords Of The Riff 2014.

It's a matter of days before Lords Of The Riff makes its debut voyage, with Monster Truck and Scorpion Child co-headlining a jaunt that's set to blaze its way through the UK! We caught up with Monster Truck six-stringer Jeremy Widerman ahead of the dates, and it looks like he's every bit as stoked as we are.

"I'd have to say it's achieving a goal I didn't even know I had," muses the guitarist. "I imagine it will be even better looking back on it years from now and seeing all the bands that will become alumni of this tour in the future. I know me and all the boys are proud to take the maiden voyage!"

On the reasoning behind classic, no-frills rock'n'roll being as desirable as ever, Jeremy notes:

Monster Truck: co-headlining a Monster tour!

"I think fans of rock have been demanding it for a very long time and it's maybe just taken a while for bands to answer the call. I know from experience it takes a long time to take a band from a vision to a first show to something like this tour, and sometimes people don't realise that the music they've wanted has been there for the taking all along. We get new fans every day that say, 'Why haven't I heard of you before?'"

Whatever the reason, rock is most definitely back, and you won't find a better example of its health than on Lords Of The Riff 2014. Head to Live Evil on page 113 for all the dates. ✠

"FANS HAVE BEEN DEMANDING THIS FOR A VERY LONG TIME"

LORDS OF THE RIFF TICKETS ARE ON SALE NOW

WIN A BLACKSTAR HT METAL AMP AND CAB!

We're giving away some of the best guitar gear on the market. Get involved.

To celebrate National Learn To Play Day, which takes place on Saturday April 12 and involves more than 100 music shops and more than 10,000 free instrument lessons, those rather splendid people at Blackstar Amplification have given us two awesome pieces of kit to give away.

Blackstar's new HT Metal range is the gear you need to discover your own sound and get your personal journey into music properly underway. Featuring extreme high gain tones and custom cosmetics, this series of amplifiers is specially voiced and cosmetically styled to appeal to today's discerning heavy metal guitarists.

We're giving away an HT Metal 100 Amp and a 412 Speaker Cabinet. The amp boasts 100W of bowel-churning power and is guaranteed to shake the foundations of any building, while the cab has been specifically voiced to work with the HT Metal range, so will slot in rather nicely. To stand a chance of winning these prizes, simply tell us:

Which of these Blackstar artists have played for Ozzy?

A) Gus G
B) Young Guns
C) Crossfaith

Tough one, eh? Good luck! ✠

TO ANSWER, HEAD TO WWW.METALHAMMER.CO.UK/COMPETITIONS/BLACKSTAR. FIND OUT MORE ABOUT NATIONAL LEARN TO PLAY DAY AT WWW.LEARNTOPLAYDAY.COM

Absolute Luna-cy!

SHIFTING GEARS

Another round of incredible names have signed on for the inaugural and *Hammer*-sponsored Beyond The Redshift Festival, which is curated by alt metal legends Cult Of Luna and will be boasting bands playing in and around an "audio-visual experience" set to blow minds and break boundaries when it hits London. Joining the likes of Cult Of Luna, God Seed and Amenra are God Is An Astronaut, Jesu, The Old Wind, Syndrome and Sleepmakeswaves. Pretty stellar, eh? Beyond The Redshift takes place on May 10 at The Forum, The Dome and the Boston Music Room in the capital.

SONSHINE

A host of awesome new names have been added to Sonisphere 2014. Making their only UK appearance of 2014 will be the mighty Deftones, who themselves are flanked by fellow new additions Frank Turner, Reel Big Fish, Protest The Hero, Alestorm, Kerbdog, Truckfighters, Max Raptor, Only Crime, Blitz Kids, Itch and Hounds. Those bands all join headliners The Prodigy, Iron Maiden and Metallica, plus the likes of Limp Bizkit, Slayer, Alice In Chains, Anthrax, Mastodon, Ghost, Gojira, Karnivool and many more. Including Chas And Dave. As you do. Sonisphere takes place July 4-6 at Knebworth Park, with tickets on sale right now from www.sonisphere.co.uk, with a £50 deposit scheme up and running.

Deftones' Chino: bringing the 'phere

REVELATIONS

ENT ✠ HEAVY FUCKING METAL

HOLY VISION

DIVINE SIGHTINGS

FIVE FINGER DEATH PUNCH SHOOT *HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN* VIDEO

"This one was a true group effort. Everybody showed up in a big way and chipped in. It's good to have a lot of capable friends. We ended up with three helicopters and 20-something rat-rods. We built a small city in the middle of nowhere, then threw a big party and filmed it. It was a good excuse to drive monster trucks, dirt bikes and burn a tanker ship's-worth of gasoline for a week. We practically lived in the desert *Mad Max*-style like the 'road warriors' for a couple of days. We had fire breathers, gamblers, scandalous ladies and even some pretty fun fistfights. Yep, it's all on film. By now everyone knows that we are masters of extracting the maximum fun from everything we do and we don't give a flying fuck what anyone thinks of it. Life is too short to not jump head first in to all the crazy shit... We'll just run from the police if necessary.

"As for the video concept, it's more of a 'mini-movie' where the song is the soundtrack, as opposed to a performance video where we'd be jumping around with our instruments pretending to play. So instead we were jumping around with machine-guns pretending to be heavily armed post-apocalyptic desert dwellers. I think of it as the same pretending shit, but with deadlier 'guitars'. Well, hey, we don't get to do this kind of stuff every day. Wait... that's not true. Actually we do..."

ZOLTAN BATHORY
FIVE FINGER DEATH PUNCH

DISCS OF DOOM

SHAGRATH

CHROME DIVISION

METAL HAMMER

METAL HAMMER

THE FIRST ALBUM I EVER BOUGHT WAS...

KISS

HOTTER THAN HELL [MERCURY, 1974]

"That was the first metal album that I bought, on cassette. I actually didn't like the music so much until a year later, when I discovered their other albums. That's how it was in the early days; you had to go with your gut because you couldn't listen to them first – you just had to gamble and pick records that had a great cover."

MY FAVOURITE ALBUM ART IS...

DISMEMBER

LIKE AN EVERFLOWING STREAM [NUCLEAR BLAST, 1991]

"There's so many, but this one just stuck in my mind. Looking at it, it was a great cover in the early 90s, and even today it still looks fucking awesome! It's like diving into unknown territory."

NO ONE WILL BELIEVE I OWN A COPY OF...

GWEN STEFANI

THE SWEET ESCAPE [INTERSCOPE, 2006]

"It's actually pretty cool. Of course, pop music isn't my favourite, but I've become much more open-minded in the last decade – to me, good music is good music. Every time we're on a tour bus with a bunch of metalheads, it's always a kickstarter to put on something like this or Lady Gaga. Everyone always sings along!"

A KID ASKS ME WHAT METAL IS. I HAND THEM A COPY OF...

SLAYER

REIGN IN BLOOD [DEF JAM, 1986]

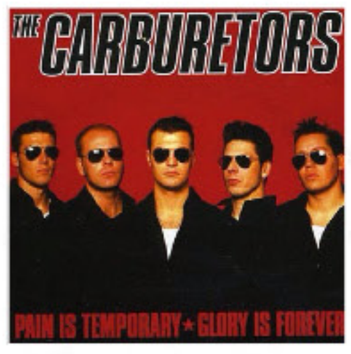
"This is hard, but for an example of what metal music is, then probably it should be Slayer. It's extreme, it has everything, and just doesn't date."

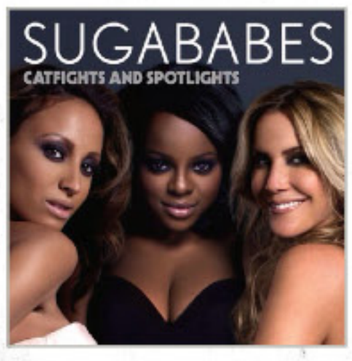
THE ALBUM I WISH I MADE IS...

DEVIL DOLL

SACRILEGIUM [HURDY GURDY, 1992]

"I'm a big fan and have been for many years. I have all the albums, but this one is very special to me. It's dramatic, symphonic and gothic, and Mr Doctor (AKA The Man Of A Thousand Voices) is a major source of inspiration for me when I do vocals myself. It's so inspiring to listen to a person that can imitate so many different characters during one song. It would be great to have him sing on a Dimmu album."





THE ALBUM I BREAK THE SPEED LIMIT TO IS...

THE CARBURETORS

PAIN IS TEMPORARY, GLORY IS FOREVER [FACEFRONT, 2004]

"This is a great, primitive rock'n'roll album that kind of makes you just want to drive fast. It's extremely perfect for that."

THE ALBUM THAT REMINDS ME OF SCHOOL IS...

MÖTLEY CRÜE

TOO FAST FOR LOVE [ELEKTRA, 1982]

"I bought it on vinyl first, and then on cassette so that I could bring it into school in my Walkman. I remember walking from my house – in the freezing cold winter – to the closest record store and trying to pick out records that looked cool. Then you walk home and study the cover on the way, take out the sleeve and read the lyrics, and the album is just totally amazing."

THE ALBUM I WANT TO BE REMEMBERED FOR IS...

DIMMU BORGIR

DEATH CULT ARMAGEDDON [NUCLEAR BLAST, 2003]

"I'm proud of everything we've done, but for the memories that come with that record, the way we produced it and the general good vibe surrounding it, that would make it my number one choice."

THE ALBUM I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL IS...

DIMMU BORGIR

PURITANICAL EUPHORIC MISANTHROPIA [NUCLEAR BLAST, 2001]

"The song *Perfection Or Vanity* is, to me, like a funeral march. I'm not sure if I would really have that at my own funeral since I made it myself, but it was meant for that purpose."

THE ALBUM THAT SHOULD NOT BE IS...

SUGABABES

CATFIGHTS AND SPOTLIGHTS [ISLAND, 2008]

"Yeah... I could live without that one, for sure!"

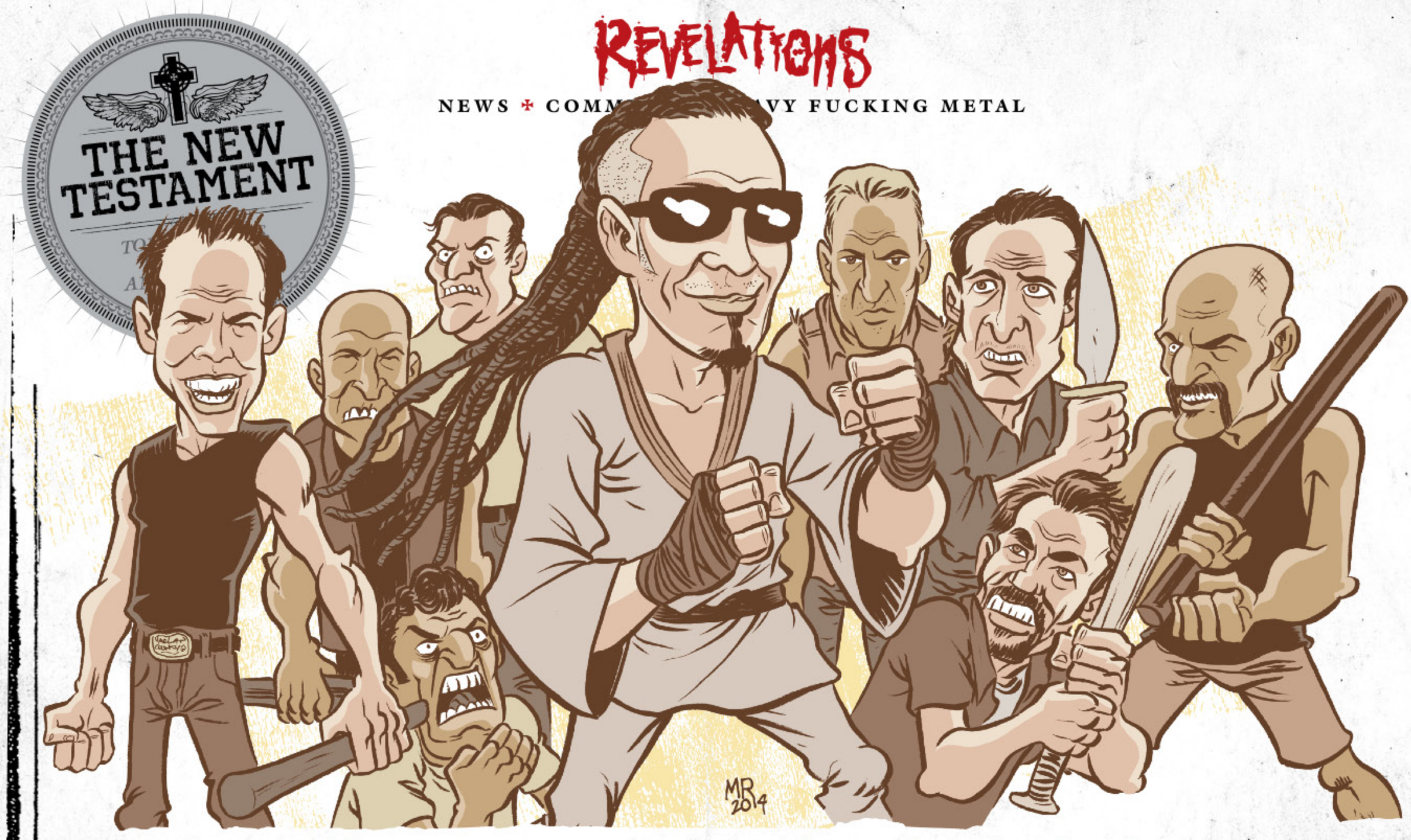
WORDS: CATHERINE MORRIS

"ON THE BUS, WE ALL SING ALONG TO LADY GAGA"

SHAGRATH

FOR THE RECORD

CHROME DIVISION'S NEW ALBUM, *INFERNAL ROCK ETERNAL*, IS OUT NOW VIA NUCLEAR BLAST



The saying 'If you want peace, prepare for war' dates as far back as the 4th century and could be just as applicable today. Five Finger Death Punch's Zoltan Bathory delves into...

THE ART OF SELF-DEFENCE

Playing guitar and writing music is what I do, but being a martial artist is a spiritual condition, a way of life and a code of ethics, passion, compassion and understanding. If you are one of us, then that is who you are.

Martial artists are not to be mistaken for the *tough guys*. Being combative for the sake of being combative isn't what this is about. Even if you're a skilled fighter, that doesn't make you a martial artist: without spiritual understanding and mental discipline, you are just a brawler, and when it comes to brawlers there's always a bigger dog. Sooner or later you will find yours.

The art in martial art starts with the number one skill: the ability to avoid physical altercations in the first place. It's a skill that requires situational awareness, understanding of psychology and body language. You have to have good communication skills and confidence to get out of the way or verbally disarm an impending attack... preferably by avoiding being in the wrong place at the wrong time altogether.

Humans are the only creatures on this planet to lose the majority of their situational awareness. Our species has completely removed itself from the food chain. We don't have natural enemies, so we stopped paying attention and became docile and dull. Wild animals, however, are so much more alive because they are always in the state of heightened awareness. They have to be, since they live in a world where another animal is plotting to devour them.

Studying martial arts restores your situational awareness. It isn't just giving you fighting skills but it becomes your way of life, affecting everything from your physical wellbeing to your mental process.

A true martial artist never loses a fight. He may not win, but never loses. Those who train know exactly what I'm talking about. Those who don't, I recommend you try and experience it. I can only describe the transformation and the new perception you will gain. Dropping your ego at the door to become a student is honorable, and it will teach you respect, discipline and humility. You will learn a lot about your own willpower, patience and perseverance. You will become stronger in all those aspects. Sooner or later you'll have to be an example to the newcomers and as such you can no longer afford any buffoonery. You'll have to be honourable, compassionate, measured and have self-restraint toward those whom now you can easily defeat. This path truly transforms you for the better.

"A TRUE MARTIAL ARTIST NEVER LOSES"

Start one if you can today. Two hours' training, three times a week is a pretty solid regimen and that comes out to 321 hours annually. So let's say in 25 years you sacrificed less than a year in total time to martial arts but the benefits are priceless, and you will probably live much longer because of it... so if the one year you put in buys you another 10, that's a pretty good deal.

I train judo and jiujitsu. In those disciplines I'm still competing at pro-tournaments and world championships. For striking, I'm practising some Wing Chun Gung-Fu and some kickboxing, but in the last couple of years I got hooked on military combatives. I found it to be the most realistic battlefield-tested, no-nonsense form. It is the combination of everything, but extending into weapons and firearms as well.

I don't see a conflict between this and my slightly Buddhist spiritual inclination. Meditation and philosophy are the tools to liberate my mind... but martial arts, my weapons and a fuckload of ammo are the tools to defend the temple that is my body! ✠

FIVE FINGER DEATH PUNCH TOUR FROM MARCH. *THE WRONG SIDE OF HEAVEN AND THE RIGHTEOUS SIDE OF HELL VOLUMES 1 AND 2* ARE OUT NOW VIA ELEVEN SEVEN

WORDS: ZOLTAN BATHORY
IMAGE: MARK RUDOLPH

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AN AUDIENCE WITH METAL'S VISIONARIES

MASTERCLASS

MATT HEAFY / TRIVIUM

SY JAMES / SWORN AMONGST

Matt Heafy was just 12 years old when he joined Trivium and set himself on the path of metal greatness. Sworn Amongst's Sy James gets some tips.

SY JAMES: "You were crazy young when you joined Trivium. When did you realise being in a metal band was what you wanted to do with your life?"

MATT HEAFY: "Yeah, I was around 11 when I first decided I wanted to play the guitar – I think at first it was just to be cool or to pick up chicks! – and I tried out for a pop punk band soon after. The band actually never told me 'no', but they never, ever got back to me to say 'yes' either. So I kind of gave up on that, and then one day somebody leant me *The Black Album* by Metallica and as soon as I heard it I was like, damn, I want to make music like that! I remember watching Metallica's *Binge & Purge* on VHS, pointing at the TV and saying: 'That's what I'm going to do when I grow up.' I practised and practised and by the age of 12/13 I was good enough to try out for Trivium (they'd only been a band for about two weeks at this point) and the rest is history!"

SY: "I remember seeing you guys when you first played Download in '05 – when you got bumped up to the main stage – how do you not get carried away with such increased fame?"

MATT: "The thing is to remember to always practise what you preach. And that was the thing for us; we've always worked very hard on ourselves, even when we have an amazing show we'll still look to pick out what could've been better. It's really important as well for every bandmember to strive to be better and to be the best at what they do – if you stop once you think you've made it, you haven't. For example, when we first started out I wouldn't do vocals for demos, pre-production or even at rehearsals, I was always like, 'Nah, I'm saving my voice for the tour.' No, that's not the way to do it: every singer, every screamer, should be working on their craft all the time, like an athlete."

SY: "I'll hold my hands up and say that I'm not as good at taking care of my voice as I should be – how do you take care of yours, and how important is it that you do?"

MATT: "Very. This might look like coffee that I'm drinking, but it's decaf; I have no caffeine and no alcohol while I'm on tour; first thing in the morning and last thing at night I take an antacid; four hours before the show I cut myself off from food and try not to talk too much – I try not to do too much press either! Ha ha! It's about making sure that your instrument is a well-oiled machine, and every member of the band needs to understand that, not just the vocalist. Again, it's about giving yourself the opportunity to be the best that you can be."

SY: "I shouldn't mention how I 'occasionally' drink before our shows then!"

MATT: Well, it's different for everybody. Corey Taylor smokes a lot of cigarettes before he goes onstage, and he sings like one of the greatest singers to have ever existed all of the time. If I did that I'd have no voice – find what works for you. If it helps calm your nerves, fine, but if you start to notice that it hurts your vocals then you've got to drop it, immediately."

SY: "How do you strike that balance between the technical, almost scientific approach to your music and the less restrained artistic approach?"

MATT: "Too far towards either extreme can be equally as bad. When were on tour for *The Crusade* we were criticised for supposedly putting on this front of over-professionalism and false humility. But we weren't, the problem was that for the previous record the label was encouraging us to be crazy, to talk about drugs and banging chicks. I've seen bands who I feel could be on top of the world commercially but they aren't because of too much partying. Yeah, have fun, but at the same time remember that it's a job; remember that your show should be as good as it can be because people are paying money to come and see you play. Once that's done, sure, party all you want. It's about finding your own balance. But it is a balance."

SY: "And that responsibility to give people their money's worth increases as you move up the bill, right?"

MATT: "It does, I suppose, but y'know what? I kind of feel that you should have that attitude at either end of the bill – whether you're opening or headlining; playing to 50 people or 50,000 people, you have to put on the same quality of show. If you look at our career in the UK specifically we went from being nothing, then to being up, to being down, then up a little and down a little and now we're on the up again. Thankfully we've been able to get on the up again each time we've been down, but it's always about staying on top of your own game. We've checked out some old videos of early shows we thought were great, and man, they weren't, they were shitty."

SY: "The longer your career goes on, and the more expectation that gets heaped upon you, how do you manage to maintain the necessary level of creativity?"

MATT: "Well firstly, the worst time to write music is when someone tells you, 'Right, you need to write an album.' That approach only makes for contrived music. There's absolutely no point in trying to force it; there's no point in having – quote, unquote – 'writing time'… the best time to write is at any moment when you feel inspired to, no matter when or where you are; if you're feeling inspired, take advantage of that fact. And, y'know, just write, too – write hundreds of songs until you get better at the craft of writing songs."

SY: "What's the one piece of advice that you'd give to all bands who want to give themselves the best chance of success as possible?"

MATT: "Try to stay grounded and practise; practise your asses off. Individually and as a band; practise singing, playing guitar; practise songwriting. Practise every single step of being a band. And know that you're going to fuck up, too – fucking up is just as important. Believe me, we've made a lot of mistakes and missteps, but they've all been part of putting us where we are now." ✠

TRIVIUM'S *VENGEANCE FALLS* IS OUT NOW VIA ROADRUNNER AND THE BAND PLAY DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL IN JUNE. SWORN AMONGST TOUR THE UK THROUGH MARCH

WORDS: TOBY COOK
PICS: WILL IRELAND

"WE WERE ENCOURAGED TO TALK ABOUT DRUGS AND BANGING CHICKS"

MATT HEAFY

HAMMETT

"ONE TIME I TOOK MY WIFE TO A MORGUE WHERE THEY PERFORMED FOUR AUTOPSIES RIGHT IN FRONT OF US"

DATE NIGHT HAS A DIFFERENT MEANING IN THE HAMMETT HOUSEHOLD

TAP TO WATCH THE VIDEO

Kirk Von Hammett, your frightful Fear FestEvil host

SOME KIND OF MONSTER

SCRIPTURE
MÖRAT
HORROR-VISION
TRAVIS SHINN

HE'S BETTER KNOWN FOR PLAYING GUITAR IN SOME BAND CALLED METALLICA, BUT KIRK HAMMETT IS ALSO ONE OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST HORROR CONNOISSEURS. WE FLEW OUT TO HIS INAUGURAL FEAR FESTEVIL TO FIND OUT WHAT ALL THE FUSS WAS ABOUT.

It's fair to say that the sidewalk outside the Regency Theatre, in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco, is used to the sight of blood. Depending on which tale you believe, the place got its name from the police working these streets, who received either bribes or a hazard pay bonus and were able to afford better meat, or from the nether regions of the prostitutes who worked the same streets. Either way, the Tenderloin has been a den of iniquity since the early 1900s and shows no signs of changing, the word 'sketchy' inevitably springing to mind. The Regency itself was built in 1909 and was once home to a Masonic Lodge, adding an air of conspiracy to a building that is already replete with rickety old lifts and secret corridors. And let's just say the Masons know a thing or two about masonry.

It is, then, the perfect venue for Metallica guitarist Kirk Hammett (or Kirk Von Hammett as he's known for the event) to throw the inaugural Fear FestEvil, a horror/metal/sci-fi extravaganza that showcases, among other things, his colossal collection of movie memorabilia. Seriously, who wants to go to some faceless convention centre when you can have zombies lurching at you out of the dark in this place? It's perfect. So much so that, as you walk into the former Masonic Lodge, where Kirk's collection is on display, your jaw will, quite of its own accord, hang open and make you look rather stupid. You may say "Wow!" but Machine Head's Robb Flynn probably summed it up best with "Holy shit!" Suffice to say that it's suitably impressive.

Indeed, Mr Hammett himself was scheduled to give *Hammer* a guided tour, except no one had the foresight to think that he might be spectacularly busy running the show and soundchecking for his later guest spot with thrash legends Exodus. Instead we are left to explore for a few hours – first Kirk's collection, and then the multitude of stalls in the basement with their endless ways to empty your pockets. Rare books, rare vinyl, devil heads, skulls, oh the temptation… It's probably for the best when we're called away, Kirk's entourage rather comically following him to the toilet by accident, before we're led, naturally, to a secret room for our interview. Kirk himself is smartly but casually dressed, thankfully not wearing the fangs he's been sporting for Fear FestEvil promos.

MIGHT WE SAY, SIR, THAT THAT'S A PRETTY DAMNED IMPRESSIVE COLLECTION. EVERYTHING FROM *LOST IN SPACE* TO *DRACULA* AND *THE WALKING DEAD*, *ALIENS*, *HELLRAISER*, *FRANKENSTEIN*, YOU NAME IT…

KIRK: "Yeah, I'm pretty OCD. When I get into something I totally go off the deep end and I engulf myself in whatever it is. When I discovered horror movies as a kid, I *lived* for horror movies. I bought monster magazines, I bought the books, I bought the toys, the comics and I just really loved it. I wasn't really that great at sports and I grew up in the city with very little parental supervision as a kid. Basically I'd get home from school, get out of my Catholic school uniform, put on some street clothes and run down to the comic store, which was about four or five blocks from my house. I'd spend my afternoons there just reading comic books and hanging out."

DO YOU THINK YOU MIGHT HAVE DEVELOPED A LOVE OF HORROR FROM CATHOLIC SCHOOL? A LOT OF THAT IS PRETTY GRAPHIC AND THEY LIKE TO FRIGHTEN THE CRAP OUT OF YOU…

"Oh yeah! The very first graphic images I can ever remember seeing were in altar boy school

Festival-goers get in the spirit. Or they're really dead

Hello, handsome!

in mass books and prayer books. They would have depictions of the crucifixion and I remember looking at it and thinking, 'Wow, this is creepy and gory and violent. Why is it so appealing to me?' I can remember, as a child, I'd just go to that one prayer book and open it up and just stare at it. A few days later I'd do the same thing."

WHY DO YOU THINK HUMANS ARE DRAWN TO THAT?
"I think it's just hardwired into our system. I watch my kids – I have two boys, five and seven, and we don't have cable TV, we give them a steady diet of toned-down Disney-type movies – and they still want to beat each other up! Every time they pick up a stick it turns into a gun or a knife or something, so aggression like that is hard-wired into human beings. We're a warrior race, a tribal warrior race. We're not a peaceful race at all. People go on about how it's a mortality thing in movies, it makes you feel good that you're alive, but I've never really bought that line. I buy the aggression."

ARE YOU DISCERNING WITH YOUR COLLECTING? OBVIOUSLY THERE ARE FAVOURITES, BUT IS THERE STUFF YOU DON'T WANT?
"There are a few movies out there that are too gratuitous, gratuitous violence, and I tend to frown upon it because it's inserted as a cheap thrill. For me the best horror movies have to have a really strong plot, a really strong fantasy element, or a giant monster or something. The torture genre of the horror genre never appealed to me quite as much."

YOU'RE NOT INTO *SAW* AND *HOSTEL* THEN?
"I'm aware of those movies and I think they're clever, but I'll be honest, one time I took my wife, who was my girlfriend then, on a date to a morgue in Chicago. When we got there they performed four autopsies right in front of us and I turned about seven shades of green. Then we went into the big cooler where all the bodies were and I saw so many dead bodies in so many different sorts of situations that afterwards, for a good month or two, I could not watch any sort of horror movie. It was the humanity in me that prevented me watching horror movies, because it reminded me of what I saw at the morgue. Like I said, there were all sorts of people in all sorts of situations. When I finally started to get out of that morgue hangover the one thing I really couldn't handle as much as I could pre-morgue was slasher films, because when you see victims of that sort of thing... again it's the humanity, or loss of humanity."

ISN'T IT A LITTLE ODD PUTTING ON A FESTIVAL WHEN THE METALLICA ORION FESTIVAL IS CANCELLED?
"Wow, I never looked at it like that. The whole impetus of this came from the Orion Festival in 2012. We had our lifestyle zones – James has his car thing, Lars had a movie festival, Rob had a surf and skate thing, and mine, it was obvious I was gonna do a haunted house... which became a crypt, which became Kirk's Crypt, which was a huge success at both Orion festivals. At the end of the second one I thought, 'This is really a lot of fun, and it's not as difficult as I thought it was gonna be.' Organisation-wise, it's a little bit of a nightmare, but it's a lot of fun so why should I wait for Orion festival? Why can't I just do this on my own?"

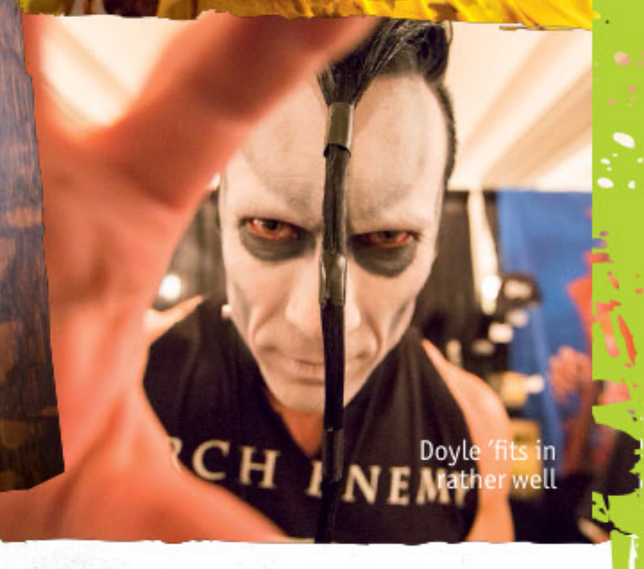
DO YOU THINK YOU'D GO MAD IF IT WAS JUST METALLICA?
"I don't think anyone can do just one thing that intensely. Even Lars likes to go skiing now and again, and that's a man who lives Metallica every single fucking day. Lars is hardcore, he's one of the most hardcore guys I know, but even he takes a break and goes skiing. For me, when I discovered heavy metal, I saw a lot of the same imagery that was being used in heavy metal and horror. I remember staring at my brother's copy of *Paranoid* thinking, 'These guys look like they've just stepped off the set of a horror movie.'"

WITH THE BEST WILL IN THE WORLD, METALLICA MUST GET BORING SOMETIMES – YOU'VE ACHIEVED

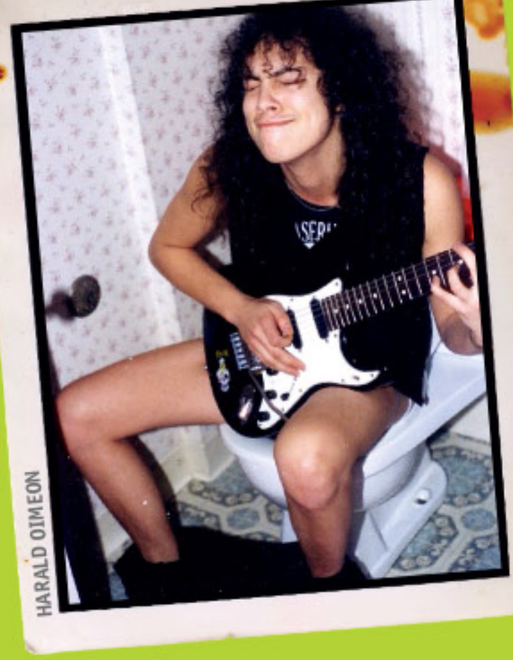
Welcome to Hammett's House of Horror!

"IN MY MIND WE'RE STILL JUST A LITTLE THRASH BAND FROM SAN FRANCISCO"

KIRK PREFERS TO KEEP HIMSELF GROUNDED



Doyle 'fits in rather well



HARALD OIMEON

WHEREVER I MAY ROAM

WE WIND THE CLOCK BACK TO THE PHONE CALL THAT CHANGED KIRK'S LIFE.

It's April Fool's Day, 1983, and Kirk Hammett is sat on the toilet when his phone rings. The voice on the other end belongs to [Exodus manager/Metallica sound engineer] Mark Whitaker, who informs Kirk that Dave Mustaine has been fired and Metallica want to fly him over to New York for an audition.

"After I hung up, I was like, 'I can't believe I just got that phone call. Was that an April Fool's Day prank?' Then a couple of days later I got this tape demo from them, but I already had it and knew two thirds of the songs on the demo. I thought, 'These guys are great, but they'd be so much better with me!'"

It was a phone call that would change his life, and indeed our lives, forever. But telling his bandmates he was leaving to join a rival thrash group just as Exodus were beginning to take off was never going to be easy...

"They were pissed. *Pissed*. I was drinking with Paul Baloff, and I told him I was doing this, and I remember he was so pissed that he poured a beer over my head. He said, 'I can't believe you're doing this, Kirk!' Then poured his beer over my head. I just took it. 'Yeah, yeah, I know...'"

Of course, with Kirk booking the band for his Fear FestEvil and joining them onstage, there are no hard feelings today. But Kirk admits he did feel bad about leaving the band he started.

"Oh yeah, there was guilt. But, y'know, I also left a lot of music with those guys. A lot of the music I wrote ended up on that first album, and they recorded some other songs that never made it. I never said anything though because of the way I left them. I always had guilty feelings about that."

Nosferatu makes a rare appearance

Doyle, Slash, Kerry King and Kirk Von Hammett... we're imaginging the supergroup potential now

GETTY

"Are you checking out my missus?!"

Carcass bring the noise

EVERYTHING YOU EVER DREAMED OF AND MORE, AND THERE'S ALMOST NOTHING LEFT TO ACHIEVE...

"I'm never really bored with Metallica because there's so many challenges that come down the road, and a lot of times you don't know what's coming! That factor's shown up on our radar in the last decade or so. Before that we were just a metal band, but now we've become kind of like a creative platform under the guise of Metallica. Playing with other people is always really great and inspiring, and I've known Gary [Holt, Exodus guitar] and Tom [Hunting, Exodus drums] since high school so it really feels like we've all come full circle and most of us are still standing and have our wits about us. That in itself is a celebration, but to play with those guys and play one of my favourite Exodus songs, *Piranha*, is so fun. I'm really stoked about Carcass too! Their newest album is fucking great! And then we have Death Angel the next night. I wanted to create a cool vibe for all the old Bay Area metal fans, and take it back to the 80s when we'd all rally round our local bands."

IS IT STRANGE TO YOU HOW MUCH METALLICA ECLIPSED THOSE OTHER BANDS? PEOPLE SAY THE BIG 4, BUT IT'S MORE LIKE THE BIG ONE AND THE OTHER THREE...

"I try not to spend too much time thinking about stuff like that because whatever I think of is still not going to be a satisfying enough explanation. It's just the way things are and how the chips fell. Exodus in the 80s had some bona fide problems, but I think their first album is just as good as *Kill 'Em All*. We were just playing the music we wanted to hear because no one else was playing it and it wasn't being played on the radio. It was only a small group of people who knew about it and it was almost elitist in that 'No posers allowed!' thing."

AND YET HERE YOU ARE DOING THE GRAMMYS THIS YEAR WITH A CLASSICAL PIANIST!

"I know! The whole Lang Lang thing just surfaced in one week, like, 'OK, we've been invited to play the Grammys with a classical pianist, here's the track, do you want to do it?' We're like, 'Sure!' even though we're just a little thrash band from San Francisco."

NOT ANY MORE, YOU'RE NOT. REALLY!

"Maybe in my mind. I think maybe we want to think of ourselves as a little thrash band from SF. Sure there's managerial situations and strategies and whatnot that we've used to become bigger, but at the end of the day it just comes down to the music. When we're all gone, the music is gonna live on, and that's gonna be our legacy, not selling out four stadiums in a row in Sweden or playing with Lang Lang at the Grammys. It's gonna be someone discovering *Disposable Heroes* and thinking, 'This is really cool stuff, what year is this? 1986, wow!' in 2086!"

HAMMETT

Exodus storm the stage

Kirk: playing like a demon

Fear FestEvil wants YOU!

IS IT TRUE THAT JAMES HAS 800 RIFFS FOR THE NEXT METALLICA ALBUM?
"Yeah, and I only have about 432!"

HOW ARE YOU GOING TO CULL THAT TO 12?
"The thing is with Metallica, there's never a shortage of ideas, which is apparently different from other bands. You're right, there's basically 12 slots and a song goes in each slot, and how many riffs can you put in each song? There's probably a mathematical formula for it, but I'm bad at math. I don't think the album is gonna come out before 2015, unless we do something really radical and just decide to work the way we did with Lou Reed, which was crazy for us. We'd be writing it with Lou, working out all the parts, and then go, 'OK, let's try it with all these changes.' We'd play it and Lou would say, 'That's the take!' and we'd be like, 'Excuse me?' Apparently that's the way Lou worked throughout his career."

DO YOU STILL GET NERVES PLAYING?
"When I'm playing with Exodus I get nervous because I'm out of my comfort zone, I don't have my tech, it's different songs that I haven't played a thousand times. Bring on the night and the fucking metal! The challenge for me is to try not to drink too much before I go onstage with Exodus."

IS THAT A DANGER?
"Yeah, we're all party buddies from way back, but it's harder to bounce back these days. I either have to pace myself or resign myself to the fact that I'm gonna feel like shit for a week."

Despite bar prices that are more scary than any horror movie, Mr Hammett is not alone in sinking a few tonight. Hell, there's a liquor store right opposite if you want to go old school, and to a certain extent that's what Fear FestEvil is all about, old-school horror and old-school metal, slasher flicks and circlepits. During the day there are seminars and forums with guest appearances from actors, directors, and musicians like Scott Ian, Kerry King and Slash. There are taxidermy classes, modelling classes, meet and greets, and legends of metal just wandering about taking it all in. Chuck Billy from Testament, Big Jim Martin from Faith No More, Jeff Matz from High On Fire and the afore-mentioned Robb Flynn, on a last blast before heading into the studio. And then, as Von Hammett says, "Bring on the night and the fucking metal!"

Why so blue?

WIN 'EM ALL!

To celebrate the release of *Through The Never* on Blu-ray and DVD, we're offering you the chance to win a movie poster signed by the metal masters themselves. Get in! And that's not all we have to give away: we're also offering DVDs and shirts for runners-up, so keep your eyes peeled on www.metalhammer.co.uk on March 3

"HUMAN BEINGS ARE NOT PEACEFUL. WE'RE A TRIBAL WARRIOR RACE"

KIRK KNOWS ALL ABOUT THE EVIL THAT MEN DO

The Regency Ballroom holds about 700 people, looks great and sounds like crap. And it shouldn't be any other way. Liverpool's grindcore veterans Carcass hit the stage as an indecipherable low end rumble, until you find that sweet spot in the crowd and suddenly it's 1989 again. But you have to find it first and risk a few stray elbows from the circlepit. And then Carcass sound incredible, belting out classics like ghosts from the past to people who haven't heard them in 20 years, along with tracks from last year's *Surgical Steel*, all louder than hell and rattling the foundations.

Admittedly we never do find the sweet spot for Exodus, but then that was always part of their charm: always a bit too much high end, and somehow that, too, wouldn't be right any other way. They thrash through 'hits' from *Bonded By Blood*, *Pleasures Of The Flesh* and the inevitable *Toxic Waltz*, while a kid dressed as the Toxic Avenger takes to the dancefloor. And sure, Kirk Von Hammett's guest spot is more pissing about jamming than anything else, a few Metallica riffs, and knocking out Blue Öyster Cult's *Godzilla*, but the smile on his face says it all. Already he's planning for next year's Fear FestEvil, taking what worked from this one on to the next and dumping what didn't. You really should check it out. Dare we say, it'll be some kind of monster. ✠

METALLICA PLAY SONISPHERE FESTIVAL IN JULY. *THROUGH THE NEVER* IS OUT NOW ON BLU-RAY AND DVD VIA E1 HOME ENTERTAINMENT

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IN THE DARK

WORDS: MALCOM DOME

It's been four years since metal lost one of its greatest voices, yet Dio's influence is now greater than ever. With the metal gods gathering to record a tribute album, we join them in remembering a true icon.

ronnie james dio

is more than an icon. He is among the most articulate and exhaustive representatives the metal community has ever had. See, even now, some four years after his death, you still think of the man in the present tense. A measure of his continuing impact.

"If you wanted to introduce aliens to what metal stands for, then you'd pick Ronnie as the man to convince them it's got a lot going for it," said the late Deep Purple keyboard master Jon Lord. And it's hard to argue with that sentiment.

Born in New Hampshire to parents of Italian descent, Ronald Padavona listened to a lot of opera when growing up, but it was in 1957 that he got the rock'n'roll bug and formed his first band, the Vegas Kings. He was a bassist at the time, but quickly switched to vocals, as he strived to find the right style to suit his voice.

His first official single, with the band that started to make his name, The Red Caps, was released in 1958. Titled *Conquest*, it arrived at a time when Elvis Presley, Dean Martin and Chuck Berry still ruled the charts.

"I got into rock'n'roll through the radio," Dio would recall in 1988. "It was an escape from reality, but like so many others, it inspired me to try my luck in a band."

By 1960, he'd changed his name to Ronnie Dio – allegedly inspired by the Italian-American gangster Johnny Dio – but despite releasing a succession of singles under different band names, nothing appeared to be working for the young singer.

"I always knew something was wrong," he later admitted. "But when Elf arrived, I found my home in heavy music."

Originally formed as The Electric Elves in 1967, the band became Elf in 1972 when they released their first album. Self-titled, it was produced by Deep Purple bassist Roger Glover, and kickstarted Dio's journey into heavy metal history.

"You knew that while the band were good, it was Ronnie who was outstanding," Roger recalled with admiration years later. "Elf were doing a lot of touring opening up for Deep Purple in the States, and they were getting bigger. It appeared this lot would be the next big thing out of America."

Sadly, that wasn't to be the case; they recorded just two more albums, including the celebrated 1975 *Trying To Burn The Sun*, before Ritchie Blackmore took a major hand in the future of Dio's career.

"We were on tour, when on a day off Ritchie's guitar tech knocked on my hotel room door," recalled Dio. "He said the man would like me to sing on a track he was gonna record away from Purple."

The song in question was *Black Sheep Of The Family*, a cover version that Ritchie had failed to convince the rest of Purple to go along with. But what was intended as a one-off session with Dio and the rest of Elf (inevitably minus guitarist Steve Edwards) would ultimately turn into Rainbow. There was an obvious magic there from the start.

Dio and Ritchie, together with a revolving cast of huge talents, worked on three studio albums and one live release. And it was 1976's *Rising*, the band's second offering, that proved the first of a number of true classics to feature the great vocalist's name.

"I knew we had something special at the time," Dio said 10 years later. "But did I know it would

DIO

"Ozzy used the peace sign, so I wanted something different. I had no idea it would catch on"

WE WOULDN'T BE THROWING THE HORNS WITHOUT THIS MAN

CORBIS

DIO

Ronnie James Dio: July 10, 1942 – May 16, 2010

rock'n'roll children

COREY TAYLOR

"I heard that they were putting together this tribute album and they were trying to get hold of me and I was like, 'Dude, I have to be on that record!' When it looked like it was going to be difficult to get either of my bands together to do it, I was just like, 'Fuck it' and I put a band together myself, just me and some of my buds. I was that desperate to be involved. I was lucky enough to meet Ronnie on a few occasions, in fact I can remember the first time... It was at an awards ceremony and we were both nominated for the best vocalist award, which, to me, was an honour just to be in the same category as him. He won and I was so stoked, then I was being interviewed later on and he walks in to say 'Hi.' If you watch the video you can see on my face I'm just totally awestruck by the guy. The thing that most impressed me about Ronnie onstage was that he just made it look so effortless, so natural. The Dio era was my favourite time of his because it's when he stepped out on his own, he wasn't a member of Rainbow or Sabbath, he was just Ronnie. The guy's a legend."

Corey lent his vocals to *Rainbow In The Dark* on the tribute album.

A youthful Dio with his Elf bandmates

GETTY

Neon Knight: Dio saved Black Sabbath's career

GETTY

"We wrote *Children Of The Sea* on the first day... Ronnie was exactly what we needed"

TONY IOMMI ON THE INSTANT CHEMISTRY

stand up? You hoped that would be the case, however you can only see this retrospectively. I'm grateful so many people rate the album."

However, Ritchie Blackmore's steady drift towards a more commercial approach was at odds with Dio's own penchant for a more romantic, gothic style of lyrical imagery.

"I love writing about fantasy," Dio mused. "To me, this reflects the epic quality of our music. While there is a place for realism, it doesn't allow me as much scope for allegory as I can get through my accepted style."

Things came to a head after the recording of 1978's *Long Live Rock 'N' Roll* album. Itself successful, this only fuelled Ritchie's desire to streamline the band.

"We just agreed to differ," Dio remembers, while keyboard player Don Airey (who had just been brought into the lineup) has a vivid memory of his first day in rehearsal:

"I walked in as Ronnie was walking out. When I asked what had happened, I was told 'He's just quit the band.' I was so looking forward to working with him, but it wasn't to be."

Over the subsequent years, Dio remained diplomatic about his relationship with the guitarist who gave him his big break:

"I have nothing but the highest respect for him, and if the chance came to work with Ritchie again, then I'd be delighted. My door is always open."

The end of his tenure with Rainbow brought a fresh challenge for Ronnie Dio, who had now firmly established himself as one of the great singers on the heavy rock scene. Black Sabbath were floundering after firing Ozzy, but a chance meeting with Tony Iommi in late 1979 at the conveniently named Rainbow Bar And Grill in West Hollywood altered Ronnie's life. He was asked to join Sabbath. And we all know what followed.

"None of us had any money," Dio said of those early Sabbath days. "But what we did have was a real belief. I know what I can do, and was convinced I could help to take Sabbath in a different direction. The other guys were on the same wavelength."

"We wrote *Children Of The Sea* on the first day, and it flowed from there," laughed a still-amazed Tony several years later. "Ronnie was exactly what we needed."

Heaven And Hell was released in 1980 and has since become, quite rightly, regarded as amongst the greatest metal albums of all time. A year later, the heavier *Mob Rules* proved this was no flash in the pan. By this time, Dio had made another bit of metal history by trademarking the devil's horns gesture, which has since become the signature sign of metalheads across generations.

"Ozzy used the peace sign, so I wanted something different," recalled Dio. "I remember my grandmother used this sign to ward off evil; I thought it would work in the context of Sabbath. But I had no idea it would catch on."

But, following the release of *Live Evil* in '82, Dio left the band because of interminable arguments appearing during certain production cycles.

rock 'n' roll children

DORO

"I first saw Dio in '85 or '86. I didn't meet him then, but it was the first time that I *saw* him. I went to his show somewhere in Germany, and we were standing on the sound desk, because I'm small! I tell you, I haven't had this kind of experience before or after. I got chills, I couldn't stand up, it was *unbelievable*. The sound blew me away, and really, I was so fascinated. I thought it was the greatest, most mindblowing thing I have ever seen. I was deeply, deeply impressed. I met Ronnie later on tour in '87 – he was playing pool, and we talked and he said, 'We're so happy you're on tour with us. If there's ever a problem, don't go to the manager, don't go to the tour manager, don't go to my assistant. Just come straight to me.' He was always very kind and lovely. We developed a great friendship."

Doro sings *Egypt (The Chains Are On)* on her friend's tribute album

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Stand Up And Shout: Dio live at Hammersmith Apollo, 1984

GETTY

DIO

"I love writing about fantasy because it reflects the epic quality of our music"

DIO LIVED FOR CREATIVITY

Dio turned up the night wherever he went

"It was a misunderstanding," Tony has said since. "The studio engineer was telling us that Ronnie would come in and turn up his vocals when we weren't there. And he told Ronnie that Geezer Butler and I were turning up our instruments in his absence. The result was confusion and anger."

"I got a call from Geezer, who told me I was sacked," admitted Dio. "But in a way that was so positive, because it meant I was free at last to do things my way."

However, the new band was starting from ground zero, as Dio revealed later on.

"I wasn't even thinking about doing anything outside of Black Sabbath, until I got the call from Geezer," revealed Ronnie. "I certainly wasn't holding back any songs from the band, that's not my way. So, when Vinny Appice [drums] and I got together, I quickly wrote two songs – *Holy Diver* and *Don't Talk To Strangers*."

Not a bad start. With bassist Jimmy Bain and then-unknown guitarist Vivian Campbell completing the lineup, the band took the name of Dio.

"It wasn't an ego thing on my part," insisted the frontman. "I had a certain reputation, and it just made sense."

Holy Diver came out in 1983 and made a huge impact in the UK and the States, where Dio's stature with Rainbow and Sabbath stood him in good stead. This was the third iconic album he had blessed in a mere smattering of years, and his reputation grew steadily as 1984's *The Last In Line* and 85's *Sacred Heart* cemented Dio's place as one of the elite hard rock bands on the planet. Ronnie even found time to put together the Hear 'n Aid project to raise funds through the metal community for the starving in Africa. While such endeavours were testament to the man's character, it was his band that remained his chief focus over the following decade or so, with Dio's lineup shifting a few times to keep the band's creative output fresh and interesting.

In 1992, Dio returned to the Sabbath fold for the *Dehumanizer* album, as the band showed they had the rigour and vision to update their sound without losing their innate place in history. However, while the album was well-received, Dio's reunion with his Sabbath chums came crashing down when the band agreed to support Ozzy at the Costa Mesa Amphitheater in California later the same year.

"I have no problem with Ozzy," Dio remarked at the time. "But I just feel that it's beneath a band of this stature to support their former singer. It shows a lack of self-respect, and I wouldn't be part of this."

Sabbath did the set with Rob Halford on vocals, and the reunion was back in the dumper. As for Dio, he returned to his own band, putting together a

rock'n'roll children

GLENN HUGHES

"Ronnie was a human being who had time for all people – those he worked with *and* his family. But more importantly, he devoted a lot of his aftershow time to his fans, and would listen to them tell their stories of how their lives had been touched by his work, and he never, ever forgot a fan's name. He was an amazing one-of-a-kind artist, who gave his love and life and art to the heavy metal genre. I first met Ronnie in the fall of 1973, when he fronted his upstate New York Band, Elf. They were opening for my band at the time, Deep Purple. I remember being backstage when Elf started playing, and I heard this thunderous super-lung voice echoing around the arena, so I went onto the stage to see and hear what was calling me. I was immediately turned on to something, someone, who I had not heard before, and that was a thrill for me. He was a master at his craft and soon, before our eyes, he would become heavy metal's greatest vocalist. Ronnie was so believable in his realm, singing of dragons, dark lords and distant oceans that carried us all away. We knew we were not alone, because Ronnie was our formidable rider in the eye of the sky, who would lead us back to our safe land. Ronnie, my brother, I want to thank you for all the hours, days and years that we spent together, and on behalf of your loving fans – we believed we'd catch the Rainbow... See you again, dear heart."

Glenn Hughes contributes the stunning *Catch the Rainbow*

DIO

"I never underestimate my talent, but nor do I overestimate it"

DIO ALWAYS KEPT HIMSELF GROUNDED

Dio, Iommi, Butler, Appice: Heaven & Hell

new lineup which was altogether more rooted in the realism of the era.

"It was a different Dio at that time," insists keyboardist Scott Warren. "It was cool. And intense. It was the 1990s. Things had changed I remember thinking, 'This is biker music.'"

"Every night, Ronnie would come up to each of us individually and say, 'Have a good gig'," sighs bassist Jeff Pilson. "That was the measure of the man. He cared about people, and wanted you to feel part of everything. I don't think I have ever had so much fun working with anyone. Each night was a pleasure."

Dio continued to enjoy a lengthy stint with his main band, with five studios albums released to generally positive acclaim between '93-2004. After that, however, there was to be yet another twist in the tale, when Dio regrouped with Tony Iommi and Geezer Butler, together with Vinny Appice (who had been a part of the Dio-era Sabbath lineups, as well as a crucial member of Dio's solo band). They avoided any diplomatic fallout with the Ozzy camp by taking the name Heaven & Hell, touring to huge acclaim and releasing the album *The Devil You Know* in 2009 to overwhelmingly positive reviews. Sadly, it was all stopped in its tracks when Ronnie was diagnosed with stomach cancer in late 2009. Tragically, despite all the hopes and prayers around the world, Ronnie James Dio passed away on May 16, 2010. The tears and tributes to him at the High Voltage Festival two months later in London underlined what a massive loss he was to the metal community, and how much he was loved by hundreds of thousands of fans across generations and continents.

"Ronnie Dio can't be replaced," Anthrax's Scott Ian said shortly after he died. "He was unique. As long as Ronnie's music is played, he'll be in our minds."

Now, some of the greatest names in metal are paying homage to the man, and in doing so raising funds for the Stand Up & Shout Cancer Trust, set up in his memory. From Metallica to Anthrax, Motörhead to the Scorpions, and Halestorm to Killswitch Engage, there are a plethora of major metal mavens who've lent their considerable talents to make this album come to fruition. They perform songs from Rainbow, Black Sabbath and Dio, yet again emphasising the insurmountable debt we all owe this most treasured and unique of metal singers. And while he may have been born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, his heart was certainly won over by metal's homeland.

"Ronnie loved the English way of life," opined Tony Iommi in 2010 of the man's penchant for his would-be adopted country. "He enjoyed a beer and a curry, and even took things so far as to have his house in LA built like a castle!"

Above all else, though, and as loved as he was across every country his music touched, Ronnie James Dio himself always knew his worth.

"I never underestimate my talent," he said during one of the last interviews he gave before his death. "But nor do I overestimate it. I believe if you get that balance right, then you'll have a healthy perspective on your place in music."

At the time, Dio hinted that he could see an end to his performing days, but not to his involvement in music. When it was suggested to him that he might retire if he dropped even a small distance from his exacting standards, even if nobody else could detect it, he responded:

"Maybe there is some truth in there. I would never like to be one of those singers who carries on long past the point at which they can deliver. It's a shame when a legend is diminished, and while I would never put myself into the category of 'legend', I can't ever see myself disappointing fans who have paid good money.

"But the one thing I will never lose is my love of music. I still enjoy coming across young talent, and helping to guide them if I can."

The breadth and depth of the classic songs on *Dio: This Is Your Life* proves that, more than anything else, Ronnie Dio's life is defined by the music he has left us. And that's an enduring epitaph. ✠

***THIS IS YOUR LIFE* IS OUT APRIL 1 VIA RHINO**

tribute track listing in full!

1. *Neon Knights*
ANTHRAX

2. *The Last In Line*
TENACIOUS D

3. *The Mob Rules*
ADRENALINE MOB

4. *Rainbow In The Dark*
COREY TAYLOR, ROY MAYORGA, SATCHEL, CHRISTIAN MARTUCCI, JASON CHRISTOPHER

5. *Straight Through The Heart*
HALESTORM

6. *Starstruck*
MOTÖRHEAD WITH BIFF BYFORD

7. *The Temple Of The King*
SCORPIONS

8. *Egypt (The Chains Are On)*
DORO

9. *Holy Diver*
KILLSWITCH ENGAGE

10. *Catch The Rainbow*
GLENN HUGHES, SIMON WRIGHT, CRAIG GOLDY, RUDY SARZO, SCOTT WARREN

11. *I*
ONI LOGAN, JIMMY BAIN, ROWAN ROBERTSON, BRIAN TICHY

12. *Man On The Silver Mountain*
ROB HALFORD, VINNY APPICE, DOUG ALDRICH, JEFF PILSON, SCOTT WARREN

13. *Ronnie Rising Medley (Featuring A Light In The Black, Tarot Woman, Stargazer, Kill The King)*
METALLICA

14. *This Is Your Life*
DIO

rock'n'roll children

WENDY DIO

"I'm so pleased with how this album came out, everyone involved has just been a pleasure to work with. I know Ronnie would have been so humbled and so proud with these incredible artists paying homage to him. When you have Metallica saying 'We can't pick one song – we have to do a medley of four!' well, he'd have been honoured. I've so many wonderful memories of Ronnie, we had 30-plus years together and we were so happy. It's hard to pick out one specific memory, but the early days when he was starting out was an exciting time and he was so happy to get back together with Sabbath and rebuild those bridges at the end of his life. That was fitting. I think people loved Ronnie because they could relate to him, he never changed, he stood for what he believed in and never wanted to let people down. He was always delighted to speak to his fans, as I said, he was a humble man, a genuine man. He always gave everything, even towards the end when he was suffering with these stomach pains, which he thought was just indigestion, he never gave less than everything he had. I just hope this album raises a lot of money for cancer research and carries on the memory of Ronnie and keeps his legacy alive."

The tribute album was the vision of Dio's widow, Wendy

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MASTODON

Mastodon (left to right): Brann Dailor, Troy Sanders, Brent Hinds, Bill Kelliher

TAP TO WATCH THE VIDEO

TOMORROW'S DREAM

CALL OF THE MASTODON **IS NO RUN-OF-THE-MILL EARLY RECORDINGS COMPILATION – IT'S A KICKASS RECORD IN ITS OWN RIGHT AND A SLICE OF METAL HISTORY TO BOOT. WE TALK TO MASTODON AS WELL AS THE PEOPLE WHO RECORDED AND RELEASED IT.**

WORDS: JOHN DORAN

MASTODON

Brann, the octopus-armed drummer, during the band's *Remission* era

A *Lifesblood*-era group shot, circa 2001. Ah, so young and fresh-faced...

Brent lays waste to the Masquerade venue in Atlanta, also circa 2001

All too often, a compilation of a band's early recordings is nothing more than a cash cow for a greedy record label, released when a band is dragging its feet over a new album or rushed out in panic if they have just moved on to a new label. And true enough, Mastodon's last release for Relapse in 2006 before moving to Warners to release *Blood Mountain* was an early doors compilation. However, *Call Of The Mastodon* – which draws together the *Slick Leg* 7" and the *Lifesblood* EP (both initially released in 2000) – is simply a damnably awesome record in its own right. Not only is it a treat for those who love the band's earlier, heavier releases *Remission* (2002) and *Leviathan* (2004), but it is an essential piece of metal history, showing that one of the best groups of the last 15 years arrived on the scene pretty much fully formed – shooting out of the traps like an atomic greyhound.

All the material here, astoundingly, is in its essence Mastodon's first nine-track demo. True, it no longer features the original vocalist Eric Saner, but this is how good they were the first time the record button was ever pressed down during their first trip to the studio literally just months after meeting. What is even more amazing is how quickly the band came together. Bill Kelliher and Brann Dailor had been in Atlanta for less than a week, before meeting their future bandmates Brent Hinds and Troy Sanders at a gig, and it's not exactly what you'd call a small city...

Atlanta, Georgia doesn't have the same profile in Europe as, say, Los Angeles or New York, but given that it is the ninth biggest city in the States most people know a few things about it. For example, a lot of people have heard of the fizzy drink-themed attraction World Of Coca-Cola and the Georgia Aquarium – essentially the world's largest fish tank. Over the last few years, the TV series *The Walking Dead*, set in and around the sprawling city, has boosted knowledge of Atlanta in other ways. Fans of the gory zombie fest will be aware that the first season reaches its viscera-slicing, eye-gouging, brain-bursting climax at the Atlanta Center For Disease Control – a scientific facility which oddly enough plays a role in the Mastodon story.

Brann Dailor, the band's octopus-armed drummer and de facto leader explains: "Bill and I moved to Atlanta in 2000. His wife had a good government job at the Center For Disease Control. We'd just got back off tour as the rhythm section of Today Is The Day. We'd seen Europe with Neurosis and Voivod and we felt that we couldn't just go back to Rochester where it was covered in snow. We were young enough to start over, so we moved down there to start a new band."

It wasn't long before Bill and Brann met their future bandmates. Troy and Brent were playing their last ever gig as Four Hour Fogger supporting High On Fire at a house show the same week the former Today Is The Day guys arrived in town. Brann explains: "Brent had an Iron Maiden jacket on so I went over to him to talk to him and he was like, 'Hey you're that crazy drummer dude, I heard you were in town with another Today's The Day dude. Our band's breaking up, this was our last show. So me and Troy are ready to go.' So that was cool. Everything just came together so fast."

It wasn't all plain sailing, however. Brent, the mercurially talented lead guitarist of the band, turned up to the first practice in a really bad way – heavily drunk to cope with heroin withdrawal – and could barely pick his instrument up. Brann says: "It wasn't good. I wanted to do something fast and wild and he was like, 'I wanna do stuff like this' WAHHHHH! [mimes hitting one note again and again slowly like Earth] I was like, 'Dude, I don't know what that is.' I mean, I liked him, he was funny and cool but he was supposed to be the best guitar player in Atlanta... well, not from what was on display that day. But then he came by the next day and picked up an acoustic guitar and started riffing this crazy shit. And then I was like, 'Awesome! Let's go straight to the rehearsal room now and start playing!'"

But despite nearly not happening at all, it was clear that they had found kindred spirits in one another. The band's affable bassist Troy Sanders explains that they had a plan right from the start – which would go some way to explaining why the *Call Of The Mastodon* material is so accomplished: "One of the things that I find about my bandmates is that the four of us have this unique chemistry that stems from us being inspired by every genre under the entire umbrella of music itself. So we're not all listening to heavy rock'n'roll all the time. We're not always listening to Country & Western. Our record collections are completely diverse. When we joined this band we looked through each others' CD booklets and were like, 'Sweet, Björk, Willie Nelson, Iron Maiden, Thin Lizzy, alright! I like your tastes already.' Flip open Bill's book and see Black Flag and Radiohead and be like, 'Yeah, cool!' When each of us contains thousands of influences then it's going to come out in the music to some degree allowing Mastodon not to be a one-dimensional band. So that immediate amount of respect for one another as regards to being music fans was set as soon as we met."

After that, it was only a matter of inviting Eric Saner to be their vocalist and they were away.

They wrote a clutch of songs and set about recording their first demo. Matt Washburn of Ledbelly Studios in Atlanta was the man to produce all of the songs that would make it on to *Call Of The Mastodon* and claims it was just "luck of the draw" that they rolled up at his studio: "The first meeting was them showing up at the studio to start recording. We really didn't plan it out, it just happened. The guys in the band were all very cool and down to earth. No attitudes.

"Back in those days, bands didn't book studio time unless they had all their songs fully worked out. Mastodon were exactly the same: they knew the songs, how they wanted them to sound, and

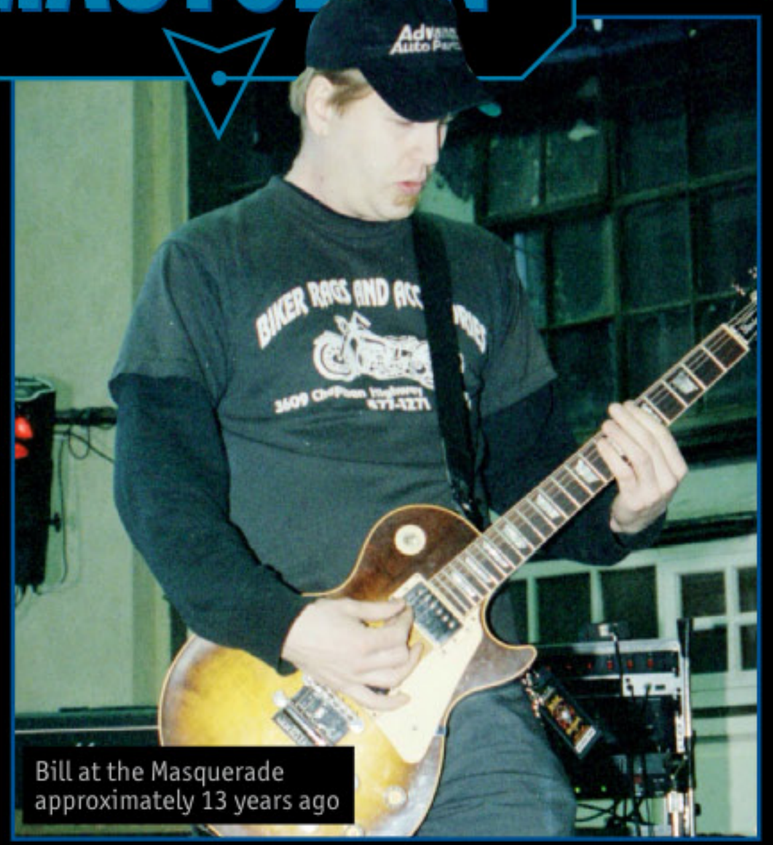
"BRENT HAD AN IRON MAIDEN JACKET ON SO I WENT OVER TO TALK TO HIM"

BRANN AND BRENT'S FIRST MEETING MAKES PERFECT SENSE TO US

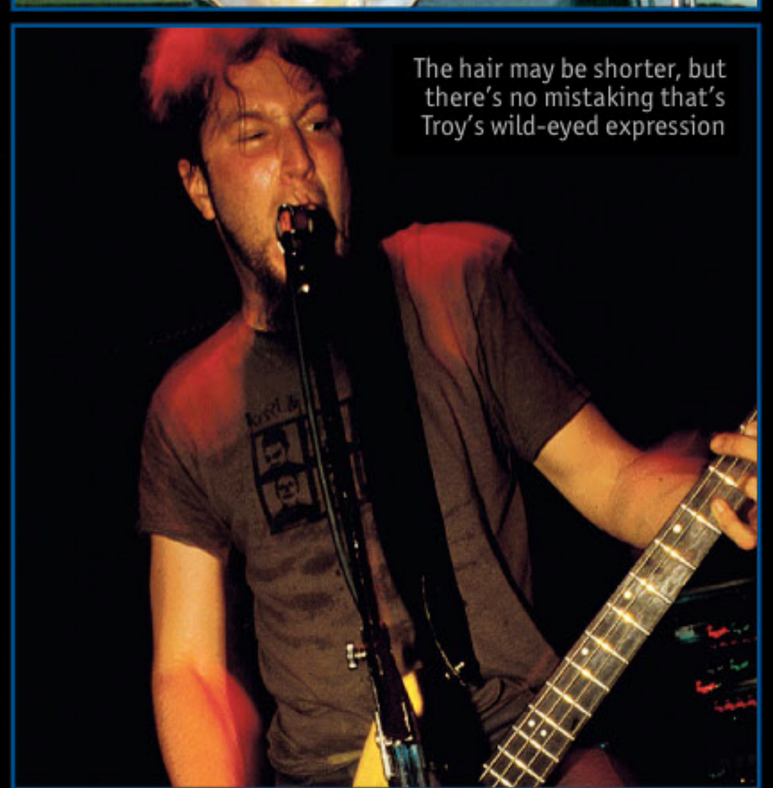
Cramped conditions: working up a sweat on a tiny stage in 2002

MASTODON

Brent in 2002. The tatts had reached his hands but not his face or neck


Bill at the Masquerade approximately 13 years ago

Mastodon: hear their *Call*


The hair may be shorter, but there's no mistaking that's Troy's wild-eyed expression

"THEY PLAYED A FORM OF METAL THAT COULDN'T AND WOULDN'T BE IGNORED"

GORDON CONRAD ON WHY HE SIGNED MASTODON

they just did their thing. These days, it's hard to find a good rock band that wants to track live. But these guys didn't even conceive of a different way to do it. We set up drums, bass, and both guitars and just rolled tape. We added vocals, some guitar solos and sound effects/samples after."

He laughs when asked what they were like and says: "Well, just like all good 'boy' bands, they have the classic lineup: Bill is the serious one, Brent is the crazy one, Troy is the quiet one, and Brann thinks he is the good-looking one. Eric was extremely serious if I remember correctly. These guys liked to have a good time, and beer and other party favours were in attendance. But nothing to excess. It never got sloppy. One night after wrapping up a session, their van was stuck in the drive. It was one of Georgia's rare winter storms and the drive was completely iced over. I remember all of us out there doing something to free the vehicle. I was pouring table salt and kitty litter behind the tyres."

Because of Bill and Brann's history with Relapse via Today Is The Day, they went to Relapse initially with their demo. Gordon Conrad, who was the label manager at the time, is only happy to confirm that Mastodon arrived as the fully formed package: "The demo was largely what you're hearing on *Call Of The Mastodon*. A raw, monster of a recording displaying a supremely talented bunch of dudes playing a form of metal so fresh and unique and cool that it couldn't and wouldn't be ignored. Within the first few minutes of hearing *Shadows That Move*, myself and a few others at the label knew immediately that we needed to work with the band. We simply had to."

Gordon explains the difference between the demo and the *Call Of The Mastodon* album:

"The album isn't a rerecording of the demo in the most traditional sense. The majority of music on it is actually from the demo. So the nine-demo session with Eric Saner became *Lifesblood* and the *Slick Leg 7"*. The band simply removed Eric's vocals and added Troy and Brent and Bill's to the session, remastered it and repackaged it. They then worked on that updated session (re-recorded some vocals, perhaps did some guitar overdubs, remastered, repackaged, etc) to turn it into *Call Of The Mastodon*."

To fully know where a band is now, it's often necessary to understand where they have come from. And for all those eagerly awaiting the release of Mastodon's sixth album later this year, there has never been a better time to acquaint yourself with the sheer might of their opening statement: *Call Of The Mastodon*. ✠

***CALL OF THE MASTODON* IS OUT NOW VIA RELAPSE. MASTODON PLAY SONISPHERE FESTIVAL IN JULY**

THROUGH THE TAPEVINE

FIVE MORE EARLY CULT DEMOS THAT SET THE WORLD ON FIRE.

TOOL – 72826

Recorded in Tool's rehearsal room by ex-Minor Threat bassist Steve Hansgen and named after 'Satan' spelled out on a telephone keypad, this early demo made waves with rough versions of songs like *Sober* and *Hush*, which later ended up on their debut EP and album.

EMPEROR – WRATH OF THE TYRANT

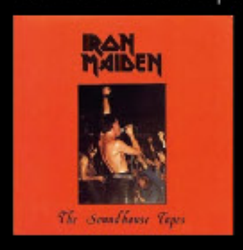
Self-released after being recorded in May 1992 and reissued several times since, Emperor's first demo was much more primitive and direct than the grand compositions they became known for. Despite the members only being 17, their uncompromising lust for darkness led to this demo becoming hugely influential.

METALLICA – NO LIFE 'TIL LEATHER

Featuring early recordings of songs that would later appear on *Kill 'Em All*, *No Life 'Til Leather* is Metallica's most widely circulated demo. It was never officially released though, which led to the band calling for its removal from stores.

IRON MAIDEN – THE SOUNDHOUSE TAPES

Maiden's first recordings were put to tape on New Year's Eve 1978 and were sent to DJ Neal Kay, who started playing the tracks at his Bandwagon Heavy Metal Soundhouse club in London. The response was incredible and all 5,000 copies sold out within weeks. The original seven-inch vinyl is worth up to £1,000.



THORNS – GRYMRK

An instrumental tape featuring only guitar and bass, 1991's six-track *Grymrk* demo was never supposed to be released, but became legendary throughout the Nordic black metal scene nevertheless. Its rudimentary alien scales and warped fizzing textures became a virus, infecting Satyricon and forever changing black metal in its wake.

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MAINSTAGE 02

EMPEROR
ICED EARTH
BEHEMOTH ANNIHILATOR
ANGRA POWERWOLF IN SOLITUDE
SCORPION CHILD YEAR OF THE GOAT

THE ALTAR

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HAIL OF BULLETS NOCTURNUS AD LOUDBLAST
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1349
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ELECTRIC WIZARD
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KADAVAR ROYAL THUNDER DOWNFALL OF GAIA
CASPIAN CONAN MARS RED SKY

MONSTER MAGNET
CLUTCH PHILIP H. ANSELMO & THE ILLEGALS
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TAP
TO WATCH
THE VIDEO

Cristina Scabbia has
a Medusa moment

Lacuna Coil

SIRΣN SCRΣAM

SINCE FORMING IN 1994, LACUNA COIL HAVE BECOME ITALY'S BIGGEST METAL BAND AND THEIR SINGER, CRISTINA SCABBIA, A STRAIGHT-TALKING ICON WITH A LOVE OF THE DARK SIDE.

WORDS: DAYAL PATTERSON. PICS: STEVE BROWN

In case you hadn't noticed, the worlds of heavy metal and film are pretty close bedfellows. Whether it's the perceptive parody of *Spinal Tap*, brilliantly stupid flicks like *Bill And Ted*, documentaries such as *Anvil!*, collaborative works like Metallica's *Through The Never* or even the fact that nu metal seems to have survived thanks almost entirely to action blockbuster soundtracks, heavy metal has frequently provided vital source material for the movies. Not that the favour hasn't been reciprocated – just look at the legion of bands who have taken their very names from movies – Black Sabbath, Shining, Mudhoney, Fu Manchu, White Zombie… well, you get the idea.

But while it's generally American movies that dominate proceedings, it's worth remembering that Italian cinema has also explored some decidedly metal-friendly subject matter. Dimmu Borgir-related Norwegian outfit Susperia tipped their hat to the legendary director Dario Argento by naming their band in homage to one of his most famous movies, and now Lacuna Coil have gone one step further, saturating their new album, *Broken Crown Halo*, with references not only to Argento, but many of his countrymen.

"We've always been influenced by movies," explains frontwoman Cristina Scabbia, as we chat. "As adolescents we were watching a lot of movies on TV. Horror movies, weird erotic movies – it's very different now, everything is censored, you don't see anything, but even so, we didn't grow up as killers or sexual maniacs or anything," she laughs before continuing. "A lot of these movies came from Italy and the fantastic thing is to think how huge an impact such Italian films have had abroad, with directors like Tarantino clearly saying he was inspired by Italian movies. We really like [Argento's] *Profondo Rosso, Suspiria*, films like this, and also the soundtracks made by bands such as Goblin. A lot of movies these days focus too much on the blood, the splatter, but his movies always have a story behind them – sometimes you don't find out the guilty one until the very end. So there's tension, you don't know what to expect or even what is going on, it's more a psychological horror movie, and that's what I like best. I mean I like to see zombies, people killing, action movies, but I like it even better when they are able to keep me watching because I don't know what's going to happen."

While Argento's creepy storytelling may have been a primary influence on the band this time around, this isn't simply a concept album about the great director. Instead the entire medium of film has been used as a springboard to comment on contemporary living through a fairly playful use of metaphor. It's a technique that allows the band a huge amount of freedom in their storytelling, even if some of the particulars seem to require a bit of a stretch of the imagination…

"In the end we decided to go further with the lyrics, so there are a lot of connections with horror movies from the past and present, characters like the vampire, the werewolf, zombies, but translated as a sort of a comparison to how we're living these days. There are songs inspired by other movies, for example the song

"WE'D GET MORE PUBLICITY IF WE SAID THE SPLIT WAS BRUTAL"

CRISTINA WILL MISS HER OLD BANDMATES DEARLY, BUT IT WAS AN AMICABLE SEPARATION

Lacuna Coil

Lacuna Coil: they've just lost two members, but the core stays strong

Is she taking the hiss?

Cybersleep, which is inspired by the internet and the movie *Inception* and the fact that people often like to live in a virtual dimension, just to escape reality. Or the song *Zombies*, which is inspired by George Romero and *The Walking Dead*. But we also thought about how people like us, making music that isn't mainstream, are considered evil. Like, 'Oh you guys are too heavy or too evil because you dress in black', and we thought about the fact that there are a lot of people like us and we are like an army. And sometimes we're confused because we're different from the others, but we enjoy our situation because we know we are different for a reason. We thought about zombies because usually in movies they're all together, fighting together, staying together..."

...Eating the flesh of the living together, being slaughtered together, yes it all makes sense now. Jokes aside, while the lyrics and themes this time around might be quite explicitly inspired by celluloid, it turns out that the actual source of inspiration is one that has been running through Lacuna Coil's work for rather longer than most listeners are probably aware. Indeed, the initial process for creating the band's music has apparently long drawn directly from moving pictures, not to mention bassist and main composer Marco Coti Zelati's vivid imagination.

"When Marco writes, he puts something on TV, it could be a documentary, a movie, a manga cartoon," explains Cristina. "Then he tries to write a soundtrack almost, so the link between the music and visuals start there. This time it was the job of Andrea [Ferro, co-vocalist] and me to add something to the lyrics to make that more clear, but the cinematic side is already there because Marco always likes to have that in the music already."

It's an unusual formula, but clearly one that works for the band judging by their continued popularity. Musically, the new record is something of a gentle evolution of its predecessor and it seems fair to say that the opus is unlikely to shock many longtime fans. All the same, there are a few twists, one of which came about largely by chance.

"WE WATCHED WEIRD EROTIC HORROR MOVIES BUT DIDN'T BECOME SEXUAL MANIACS!"

THAT'S DEFINITELY A GOOD THING, RIGHT?

"We were supposed to make the album in LA because the producer Jay Baumgardner owns a studio there," Cristina explains, "but because of personal problems we were forced to stay in Milano so we recorded everything there. The owner of the studio in Milano is an ex-member of a big prog band called PFM, and is a collector of vintage equipment and one day he came out with all this stuff, Fenders from the 70s, old Gibsons, pedal boards, a lot of very old and cool stuff. The guys went nuts, so the sound is more rock, more vintage and it gives something that was totally unplanned to the album."

Of course it's those unexpected happenings that give each record its character and stop things from getting stale. And when you've played together for almost two decades, that's pretty important. All the same, it's reassuring to see that, far from feeling burnt out, for Cristina at least, the band are actually on

SPAGHETTI SPLATTER

THREE VINTAGE ITALIAN CLASSICS THAT SHOULD BE ON EVERY TRUE HORROR DEVOTEE'S SHELF!

BLACK SABBATH (1963)

Heavy metal's founding fathers borrowed their moniker from a poster for this horror landmark, directed by Italy's maestro of genre cinema Mario Bava. An exercise in Gothic atmosphere, consisting of three tales of terror, held together by the tombstone presence of old school king of horror, Boris Karloff.

DEEP RED (1975)

Also known as *Profondo Rosso*, *Deep Red* is Dario Argento's favourite among his own films, a masterclass in the twisted genre of stylishly shot, savagely violent Italian murder mysteries known as Giallo. Argento's direction compels and dazzles the eye, while the punchy prog rock soundtrack by the legendary Goblin helps conjure an exotic atmosphere of sadism and dread.

SUSPIRIA (1977)

An adult fairytale concerning a Munich ballet school that harbours a terrible secret of arcane witchcraft, *Suspiria* is arguably Dario Argento's masterpiece. Lurid, unnatural colours and Argento's inventive camerawork and bizarre plot combine with Goblin's haunting, jarringly experimental soundtrack to almost literally manifest a vivid nightmare on the screen. You won't sleep for a month.

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Lacuna Coil

Cristina Scabbia: watching Italian horror has had no lasting effect on her...

something of a career high.

"The special thing about this album is, well we know it's normal for bands to say, 'This is our best album ever', but I think even with our last album, *Dark Adrenaline*, we reached perfection in terms of what Lacuna Coil ought to be, that balance between our roots and the modern influences. So we're happier than we were before, we're even darker than before and we're probably improving even more on the lyrical side of things. Really, I think this is the best we've ever done."

Despite the confidence in Cristina's words however, the band have been rocked somewhat by a fairly significant loss. Indeed, just before our interview the announcement was made that *Broken Crown Halo* would mark the last appearance of drummer Cristiano Mozzati and guitarist Cristiano Migliore – both full-time members since way back in 1998 – who have departed the group for family-related reasons. And interestingly the band say that for now there will be no auditions for new members, with Ryan Folden – who has filled in already within the band – taking over drums for the coming tour.

"This is the last album we did altogether," confirms Cristina. "Probably we could get more publicity to create a fight and say it was the most brutal, harsh separation ever! But it really was *not*, we have definitely stayed friends. And nothing changed really, because the people who wrote the songs and lyrics are still in the band. The only difference is that they are not on tour, but even then Crist [Mozzati] hasn't been on tour with us for a year pretty much, because he wanted to stay at home with his family. Marco didn't come on tour for a year because of a problem with his arm. So people understand that there are changes going on, but I think the fact it was a totally friendly split will just even out the perception of people to say 'They just moved on, good for them, everybody is happy, it's OK.' I mean there were no fights, no harsh things between us. It's hard because of the brotherhood, but it would be much worse if they were on tour and they wanted to be somewhere else."

As mentioned, the band hardly have time to ponder the situation too much as they are already taking part in a fairly significant tour, namely the Hottest Chicks In Metal package. Quite understandably, the title of the tour has resulted in a few raised eyebrows, not to mention a few comments regarding the presentation of women. It's clearly a question Cristina has been asked before and one that she seems to have somewhat mixed feelings about.

"This is actually the second of these tours we're doing," she explains. "The reasons for the name is because it's connected to a 'Hottest Chicks In Metal' magazine article in the States, where they talk about bands that have a woman in the lineup. So it's not a name we invented, and I do understand that it might sound a little cheesy. I don't consider myself 'hot' because I'm just a regular girl; you can't call me 'hot' just from a picture. I can understand it might sound a little offensive, it sounds a bit like pieces of meat put onstage to attract people. But at the same times it's more ironic, so I think people are smart enough to know there's not going to be strippers on stage, it will be serious bands with female members."

"I CAN UNDERSTAND IT MIGHT SOUND OFFENSIVE, IT SOUNDS A BIT LIKE PIECES OF MEAT PUT ONSTAGE"

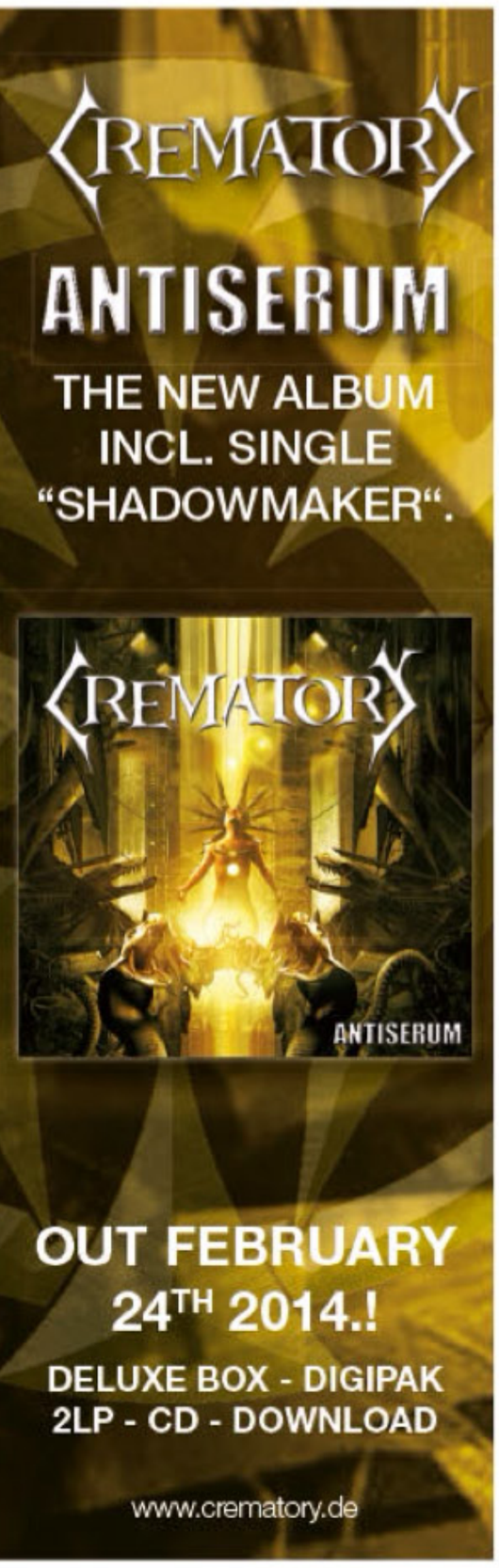
CRISTINA CAN UNDERSTAND WHY THE 'HOTTEST CHICKS IN METAL' TOUR UPSETS SOME PEOPLE

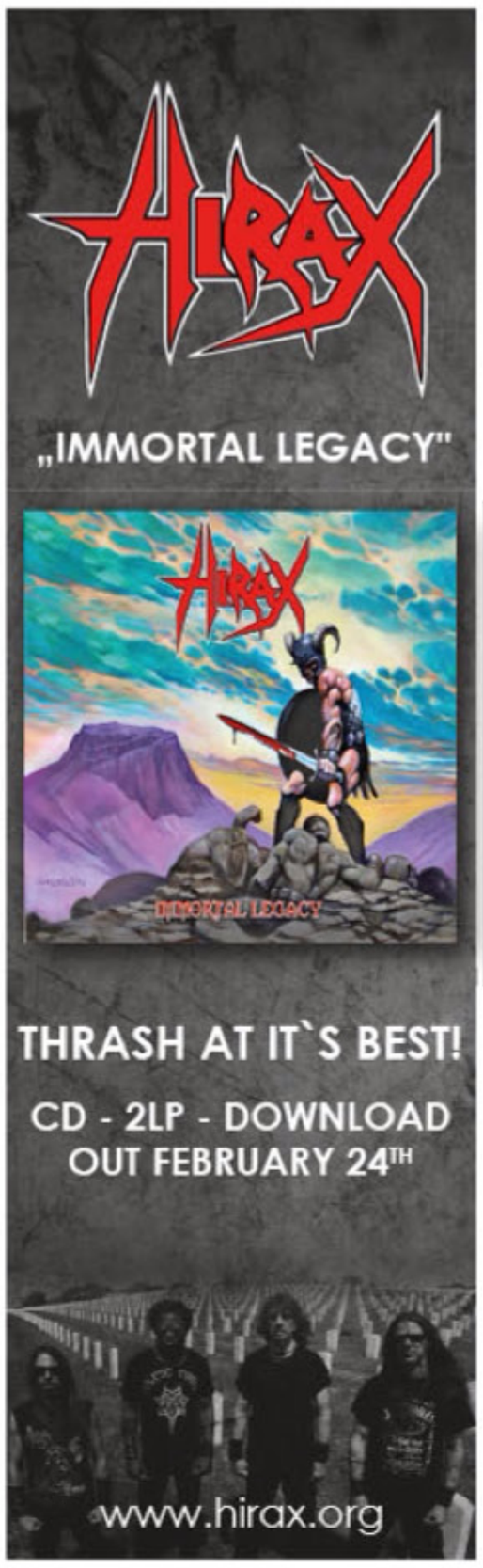
The name might not be the band's choice, but it might be said that the fact that such a magazine exists in the first place says something about women's place in the genre generally. Cristina is unsure...

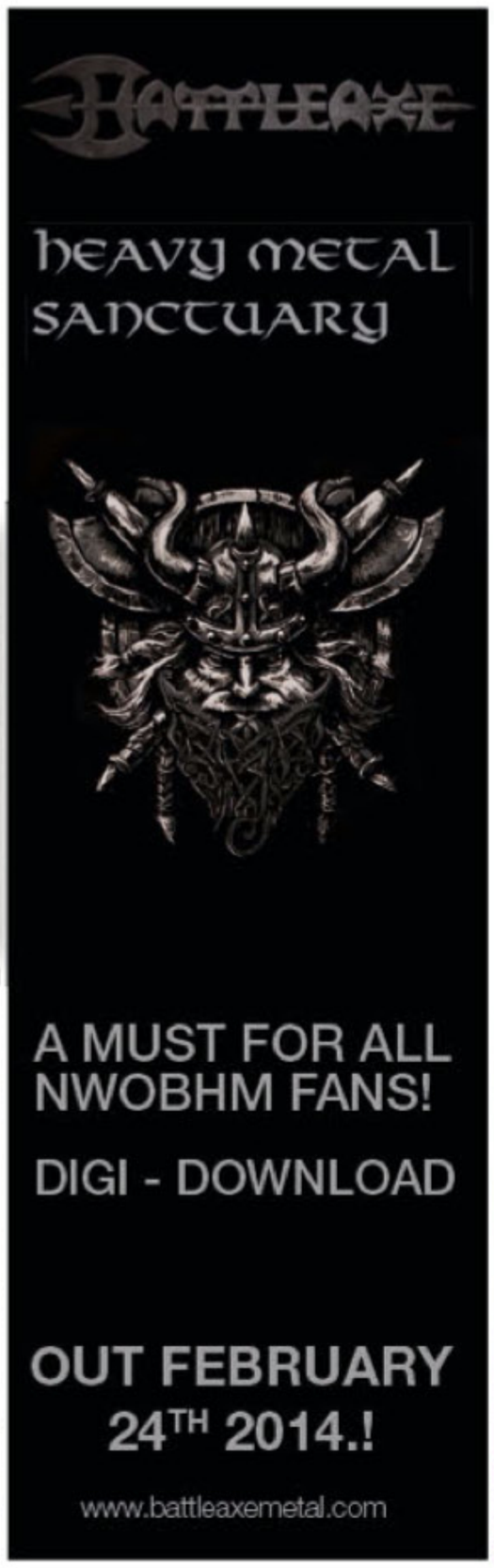
"Not really," counters Cristina. "Guys do the same thing – think about figures like Axl Rose, he was considered a sex symbol, Mötley Crüe were portrayed as hot guys, so it's the same thing. I think it's *still* this way. Maybe the image that girls like about guys changed now there are bands who are androgynous rather than macho, they're more into eye-painted guys, thin bodies that are, in a way, feminine. So the tastes changed but there is still the sex symbol issues, even with guys. There are a lot of girls who *totally* buy magazines for the pictures of, I don't know... Black Veil Brides."

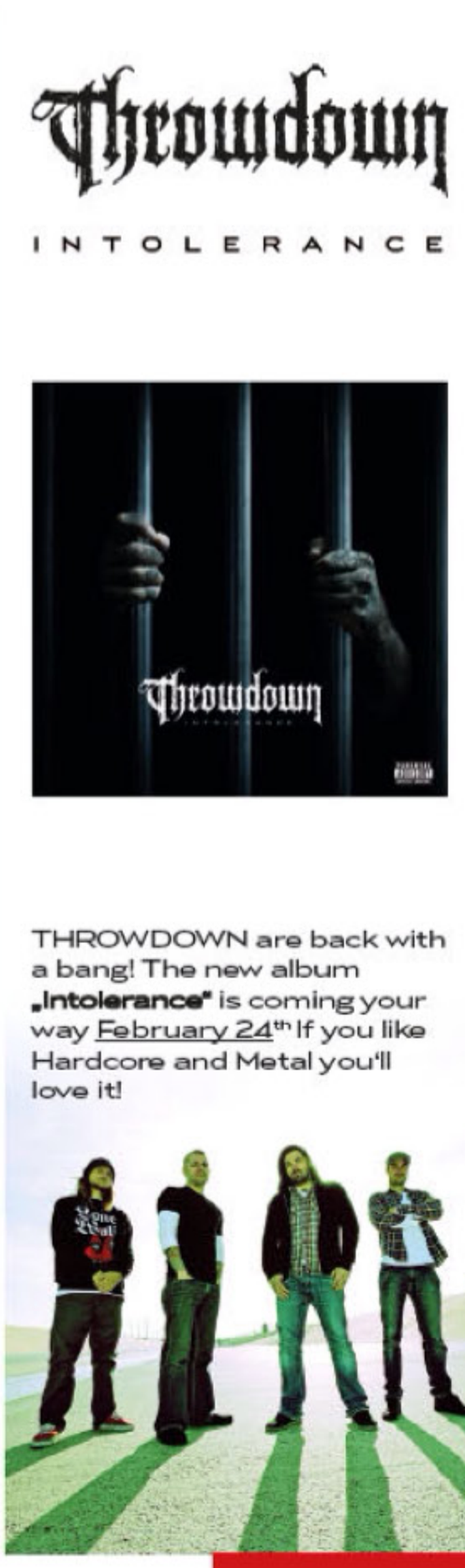
Heaven forbid. ✠

***BROKEN CROWN HALO* IS OUT MARCH 31 VIA CENTURY MEDIA AND THE BAND PLAY BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL IN AUGUST**









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“RANDY SAID IF HE COULD GO BACK IN TIME TO BEFORE THAT SHOW AND BREAK UP THE BAND, HE WOULD”

HE WAS FOUND NOT GUILTY, BUT RANDY STILL BEARS THE BURDEN

TAP TO WATCH THE VIDEO

John Campbell, Mark Morton, Randy Bythe, Chris Adler and Willie Adler walked together in hell

lamb of god

THE END OF HEARTACHE

WHEN LAMB OF GOD STARTED FILMING A DOCUMENTARY, THEY ENDED UP CAPTURING ONE OF THE BIGGEST STORIES OF THE METAL YEAR. WITH THEIR SINGER NOW A FREE MAN, THE QUINTET ARE FINALLY READY TO REFLECT.

WORDS: DAYAL PATTERSON

These days we hear that bands and musicians have 'been on an emotional rollercoaster' so often that the phrase has almost lost its meaning. Life, after all, is an emotional rollercoaster, whether one pays their bills by playing music, fixing shoes or working in a bank. That said, it's very hard to think of a better way to describe the last couple of years for Lamb Of God. Having quietly become one of the biggest metal bands in the world – a pretty epic journey in its own right – the group's career was more or less stopped in its tracks in 2012 due to the delayed reaction to the death of a fan two years earlier at a Czech concert. Probably every band's worst nightmare, what made matters even worse was the fact that vocalist Randy Blythe was accused of directly causing the death by pushing the deceased, Daniel Nosek, off the stage, where he then struck his head. Not only emotionally devastating, this also led to Randy being charged with manslaughter and facing the possibility of a hefty jail sentence in a foreign prison. His bandmates could do little but look on and watch as events unfolded.

As we all know, Randy was ultimately found not guilty. Which of course was a cause of huge relief for the band, but also a relief tempered by the knowledge that, whoever was to blame, a fan had lost their life as a result of one of the group's performances. Unsurprisingly the band found themselves dealing with a whole set of conflicting emotions, a situation that remains as true as ever as they prepare for the release of a documentary – *As The Palaces Burn* – that covers the most difficult period of their career to date. And there's no small irony in the fact that the crew behind the movie had originally joined the group to make a film about the *positive* impact that Lamb Of God had had upon its fans around the world.

"We were filming a movie about our fans and trying *not* to make a movie about us," explains drummer Chris Adler as we sit backstage at the Brixton Academy. "These were people in far-flung places, situations that weren't typical. Probably one of the most interesting ones was Israel because there you have Jews, Arabs, Catholics, all at our show, and they leave all that at the door and jump around together, smiling. So it was about how music in general, using us as the vehicle, can really bring people together. That was the goal of the film. But then it turned into a film that no one wanted to make. As is the case with a lot of documentaries – good documentaries – shit happens."

> "ONE TIME I WAS INTERVIEWED AT HOME, I SHED A TEAR AND HAD TO STOP"
>
> JOHN CAMPBELL REMEMBERS THE PAIN ALL TOO WELL

Indeed, while the group called a time-out for a short period while they collected themselves, they did indeed allow the filmmakers to return and document an ordeal that many bands would have preferred to keep firmly behind closed doors.

"The guys who made the movie are definitely very serious about their craft and needed to document what was happening," explains bassist John Campbell. "They very respectfully reached out to us to find out where our line in the sand was, and then continued making the film."

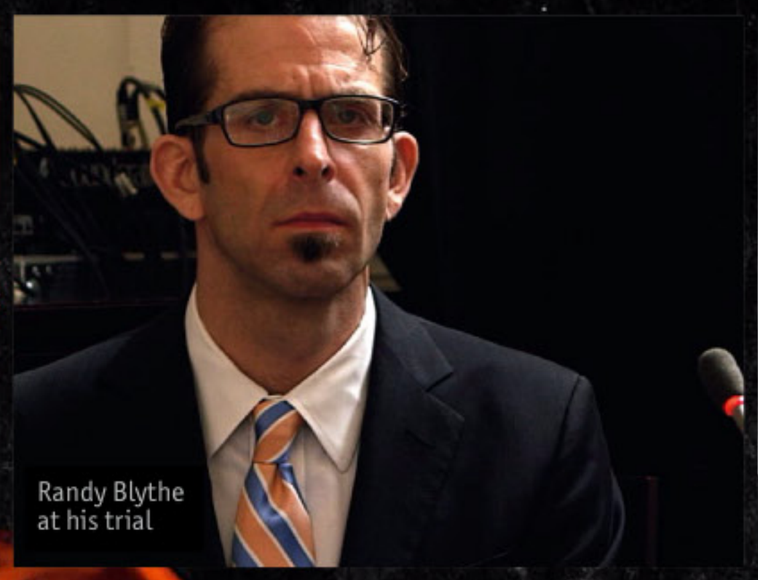
"We definitely weren't their boss," smiles Chris. "We could suggest things, but they were there to make a documentary, and it didn't really matter if we liked it."

"One time they interviewed me in my home and I shed a tear there for a second and had to stop the interview," John recalls. "I said to them afterwards, 'If I watch the movie and it's in there, I better feel like that needed to be in the movie.' And I guess they felt it did."

While the two admit that they hope the film could appeal to a broader audience than their own fans – or even the wider metal community – they are obviously hesitant to voice too much ambition for it. Indeed, in many ways it would be impossible for the band to throw themselves behind it in the same way that, say, Anvil did with their film. After all, how can a band comfortably promote a film that deals with the death of one of their own fans without a sense of sadness, even if the work does enable them to show their side of the story?

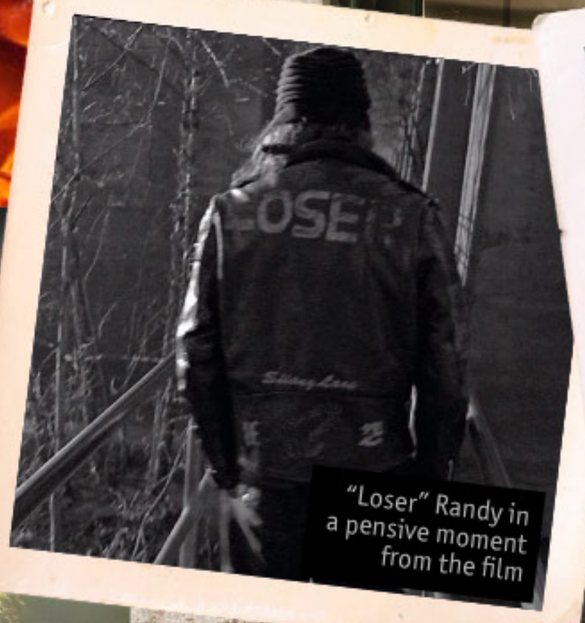
"There's such a range of different things going on," sighs Chris. "We're horrified this tragedy happened, first of all – that trumps any talk of trying to promote this movie. At the same time we're very defensive, because here's our friend and singer stuck in jail for something that we don't believe he had any purposeful role in."

One of the gigs featured in *As The Palaces Burn*


Randy Blythe at his trial

How we are all more accustomed to seeing Randy: onstage and revelling in it

Onstage at Bloodstock, their first UK gig after Randy's arrest



"Loser" Randy in a pensive moment from the film

A tight band, but Randy would give it all up to bring back Daniel

Food for thought

"It's a story that was told, but it's a tragic story so it's a bit difficult to see the commodification of that," admits John.

Of course, the flipside of the coin is that the whole Czech affair has left the band in even higher demand than they were in already. And not only due to the effects of publicity, but because the hiatus the court case necessitated has made fans even hungrier for a new album, not to mention curious to see what influence the legal troubles will have had on Lamb Of God's music.

"We're probably more in demand than we've been for a long time," admits Chris, "but then the last two years have probably been the most difficult of our career. So I think we need some space from this, to try to be normal again. Because everywhere we go there are people asking about the film. Which is great. Well, it's not great, someone died. I hope there's a lesson to be learnt here; it's not just a story of the band or us trying to sell the band or using the tragedy to sell the band. But all these years are probably going to be responsible for some great riffs."

A conflicted situation if ever there was one. But it's certainly a much better situation than the band would have surely found themselves in had Randy lost his case. What exactly would have happened then to Lamb Of God, one wonders? It seems even the band can't be completely certain.

"That was part of the pain of the initial onset of the situation," admits John, "like, what the fuck happens now? I can't say I ever completely figured that out. I don't think we would be touring as Lamb Of God without Randy Blythe, though."

"We would have discussed it with the band, but I had my mind made up that if Randy was gone we would stop," Chris agrees. "If he decided to quit, to go and sell vacuums or something, then I'd replace him. But if he's sitting in jail for something we don't believe he was responsible for, no.

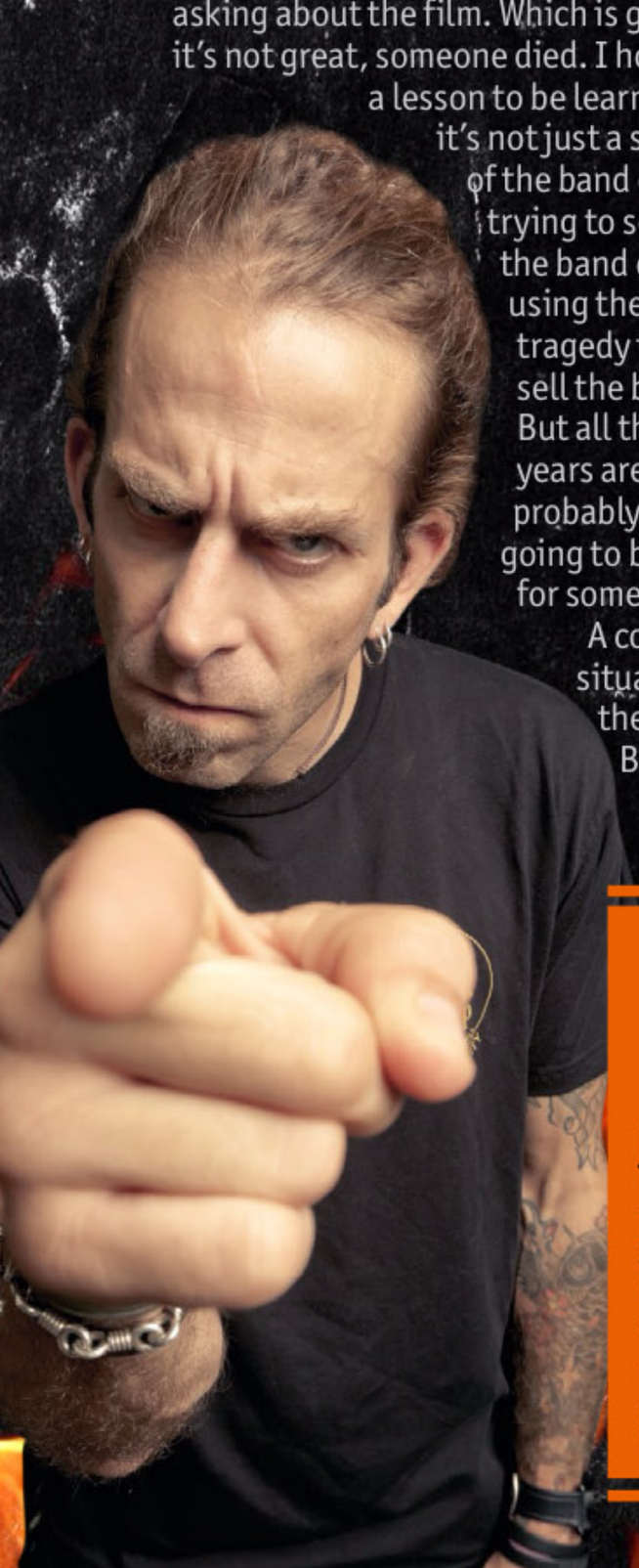
"And, of course, there was nothing we could do."

A stressful experience like this is bound to change everyone involved, and probably has the potential to send someone in one of two obvious directions. The first would be to ground them; the second to completely send them off at the deep end. As John explains, Randy has thankfully taken the first path, though, as he explains it, this was actually just a stage in a greater journey that had begun before the whole Czech incident.

"Well, Randy was already a different person than he had been," he ponders. "He was already taking on the world with his newfound sobriety. So it absolutely changed who he was, but he was already changing. He was well on the way to having his feet on the ground and this only further resolved him to do that. I mean, we were really on top of our game on that particular tour, it was going so well."

"THE LAST TWO YEARS WERE THE MOST DIFFICULT OF OUR CAREER"

CHRIS ADLER IS READY TO MOVE ON



CONTRACTOR

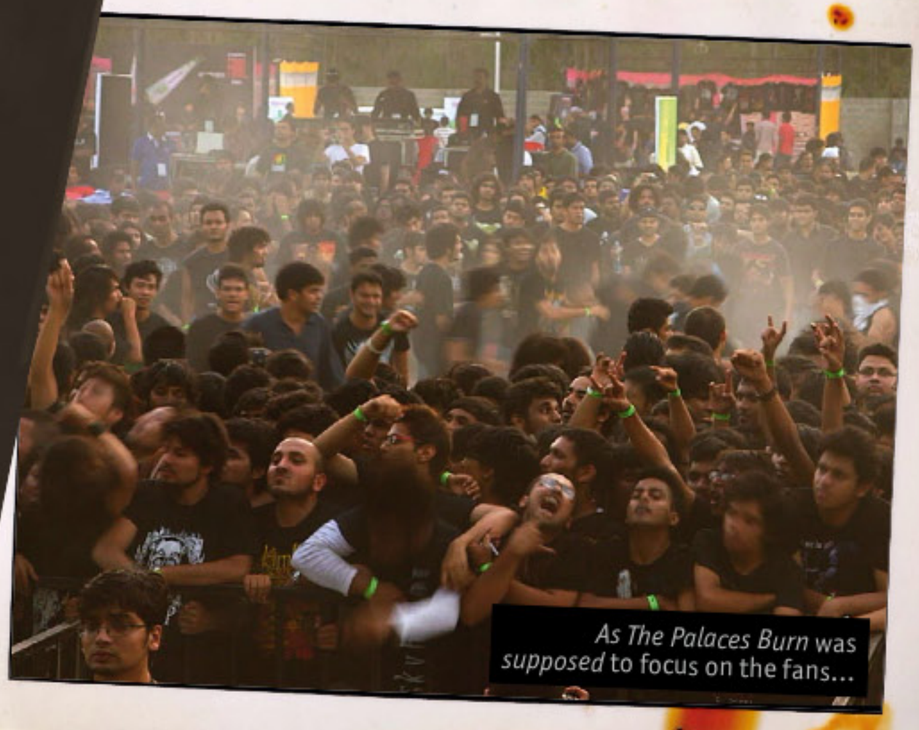
BETWEEN THE BURIED AND ME GUITARIST PAUL WAGGONER ON JOINING LAMB OF GOD FOR THEIR EUROPEAN TOUR...

HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THE LAMB OF GOD GIG?
"John called me right before Xmas, which is not unusual, since I lost a bet with him several years ago which has me now obligated to provide his children with their yearly bounty of gifts. But this call was different. He told me Mark couldn't do the tour, they needed a fill-in, yadda yadda yadda. I agreed to do the tour if he would wipe my lost bet off the books. He agreed, which was great for me, but terrible for his children – they didn't receive any Xmas gifts. Last I heard, they both ran away and joined a gang. Yes, I knew the guys all prior to this, and I filled in for Mark a couple years ago on a South American run."

SO YOU DIDN'T GO THROUGH AN AUDITION PROCESS?
"No audition. Waggoner don't need auditions. I'm the man."

WHAT'S IT LIKE BEING A MEMBER OF LAMB OF GOD?
"I am not a member – Mark will be back. But they're great guys and we share a similar sense of humour, so it's a good time out on the road with them, with the exception of Chris's snoring and John's nocturnal farts."

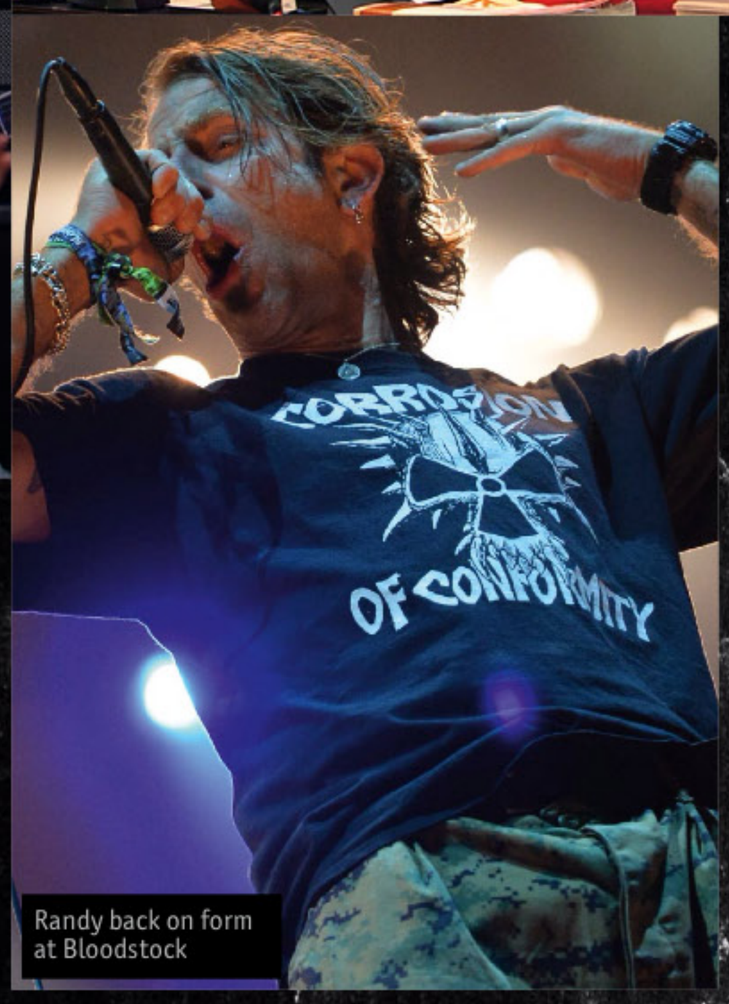
HOW DIFFERENT IS IT TO YOUR OWN BAND?
"Musically, way different. Of course, I'm trying to interpret


As The Palaces Burn was supposed to focus on the fans...

...but that focus shifted to the court case

Support from their hometown fans

Willie Adler: six-string master



Randy back on form at Bloodstock

"I do think it's changed him quite a bit and I think he has his shit together more than he ever had," adds Chris, before making a powerful admission. "He actually said earlier today that if he could go back in time to one day before the show and break up the band, he would."

How the experience has affected Randy in the long term, one can only speculate. Certainly, the band as a whole seem to still be recovering in an emotional sense from all that has happened, and aside from this tour, they are keen to take time out and collect themselves before moving forward. Chris reveals that no work has begun on a new album, and that there will be something of a break before they reconvene in the rehearsal room in summer. For now, taking stock is an understandable priority, particularly in light of Mark Morton's withdrawal from the band's recent tour to attend to personal matters in the US [see Contractor sidebar below for the lowdown from his temporary replacement, Paul Waggoner]. And with the group now reaching their two-decade anniversary, it's perhaps a time for reflection. Not only for the band, but for metal in general; after all, with the exception of Slipknot, there are not many bigger names in the scene.

"Two decades is a long time, older than some of our fans," chuckles John. "We never expected this at any level. Our goal was just to write an original jaw-dropping set, then go play a party and have a great fucking time and have people say about us, 'Those guys are badass.'"

"That was the scene we came from, what the guys we thought were cool were doing," confirms Chris. "These bands would write these amazing songs and then go and play a shitty club to 20 people, blow everyone off the stage and would then be done with it, never want to play outside of Richmond. Just once a month play a party or a bar.

"Personally I've been shocked," he continues, "that out of the bands we were grouped with which made up the NWOAHM thing – which was Killswitch, Unearth, Shadows Fall, God Forbid – it was us who ended up closer to the top of the pyramid. Before that, nu metal was sort of falling off. People were sick of that shit and the heavy fans needed something a little bit more aggressive and I think all those bands filled the gap.

"I really thought Killswitch were going to be the biggest band in the world: they have catchy tunes and songs about girls, whereas we were pummelling it out in the basement, trying to write heavy shit with political lyrics. I don't know why it happened. I think some of it is the honesty and the fact that we write for ourselves and aren't writing songs for other people is kinda contagious."

"And the fact we write these kickass songs doesn't hurt!" concludes John with a hearty laugh. ✠

"I'M SHOCKED THAT OUT OF THE NWOAHM BANDS, IT WAS US WHO ENDED UP CLOSER TO THE TOP"
CHRIS CAN ONLY BE PROUD OF HIS BAND'S ACHIEVEMENTS

someone else's guitar playing as faithfully as possible, too, which is no easy task. It's a challenge, but one that I enjoy."

AND WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE LOG SONGS TO PLAY?
"*The Undertow, Walk With Me In Hell* and *In Your Words*. The rest suck. Ha ha ha!"

Paul Waggoner, centre, with his BTBAM cohorts

***AS THE PALACES BURN* IS SCREENING NOW AT UK CINEMAS**

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Sikth (left to right): James Leach, Justin Hill, Dan Weller, Dan Foord, Mikee Goodman, Pin

THE SIKTH SENSE

IT WAS ALMOST LIKE THEY COULD SEE INTO A CRYSTAL BALL AND SHAPE THE FUTURE... WE WELCOME BACK A BAND WAY AHEAD OF THEIR TIME.

WORDS: EMMA JOHNSTON / PICS: JAMES SHARROCK

It's Wednesday, January 22, 2014, and all six members of British progressive metal pioneers Sikth are in a room together for the first time in six years. They're in a London studio for a *Metal Hammer* photoshoot, and the reason for *that* is the prayers of djent fans across the land have finally been answered: they've reunited for a one-off show at this summer's Download festival.

Donington is the perfect setting for their comeback. The last time Sikth – vocalists Mikee Goodman and Justin Hill, guitarists Dan Weller and Graham 'Pin' Pinney, bassist James Leach and drummer Dan Foord – played at the festival, in 2006, it felt as if everything we knew about British metal had been torn apart and reconstructed by this gang of mad geniuses, their music brutally heavy, dizzyingly complex and uniquely melodic. Suddenly hardcore, thrash, prog, tech metal and straight-up jabbering insanity were smashed together to create a wild-eyed new monster, and it was glorious. The future, it seemed, was theirs for the taking...

Of course, things didn't really work out that way, and they split in 2008, shortly after the departure of Mikee. But alongside Meshuggah, they created a whole new movement, and in the intervening years their influence is more palpable than ever. And yet, despite talk of bromance throughout the shoot, they remain refreshingly unsentimental about their return.

"We kept bumping into each other and talking about it," says Mikee. "I told everyone I was up for it for ages; it's just when people can free up a bit of their schedule to do it."

"At Download last year I just got the bug back," adds Dan Weller. "I hadn't had the metal bug for ages, but I looked at a lot of metal bands and I had this overwhelming feeling that I had when we first formed Sikth, which was there's still a place for this. When we formed Sikth I thought we could do something unique."

So plans were made, organisers jumped at the chance of hosting them, and they're set to headline the Red Bull stage in June. It wasn't the first offer they'd had – plenty of European festivals have tried to book them before – but it was the first one that felt right.

"The love of doing it is the main thing," says Dan. "There's not that much money to go around for six people, so it definitely wasn't for financial reasons, it was just that we desperately wanted to do the gig. There's a lot of people that should see Sikth before we get too old and decrepit. And we miss it, massively."

"There was ruthless pisstaking all the time. We weren't a brotherly band, it was each man for himself"

DAN LOOKS BACK ON ALL THE TENSION

Mikee seems unimpressed with the hand dealt...

Sikth formed in Watford at the turn of the century, born into a diverse and supportive time for British metal. Pre-social networking, they joined bands like Earthtone9, Raging Speedhorn, Vacant Stare and Miocene in spreading the mutual word, handing out flyers and spending Sundays getting drunk together at the KBY club at London's Barfly.

"The whole scene got together and it was really strong. Everyone knew each other, lots of people went to gigs," remembers Mikee. "Nowadays it's changed

Mikee doesn't cheat Death, he torches it

Dan Foord gets beard tips from the master

James Leach gets ideas befitting of his station

a lot. People's friends will go to see their band and then they'll just leave. It was a really unified scene back then and I do miss that."

It seemed that anything could happen. But by 2007, personal relationships were deteriorating, and an urge to work on different types of music, for Mikee, was too strong. But ultimately, it was their search for musical perfection that was their downfall.

"Sikth as a group of people was quite a difficult bunch to work with," admits Dan. "We're all quite different and all very stubborn. Me and Pin, when we formed the band, we wanted the cream of the crop. And we were ruthless in searching for them. If we're going to make really intense music that no one else can play, everyone needs to be shit hot. Because of that we were always so under pressure that we put on ourselves, that we forget how to have fun. If you're constantly trying to achieve and leave a legacy, you forget that, wow, this is really fun. Because of that it became very tense. There was ruthless pisstaking all the time. We weren't a brotherly band, it was each man for himself. It was an intense band to be in and it took its toll."

When Mikee left, Justin followed him. The remaining members started auditioning replacements, but no one else really clicked. They were in debt thanks to disagreements with their label, stress escalated, and it became clear, after just two brilliant albums, that the cracks were irreparable. Are those tensions gone now?

"Yeah, 100%," says Dan. "With hindsight we all realise the part we played in being a dick. I was a control freak, so I had to 'fess up to that. And Mikee was a bit difficult as a frontman – he used to be a bit of a diva sometimes. We all have our reasons for looking back and going, 'You know what, we could have been easier to be around.' But all of that stuff made up what Sikth was, so maybe we just have to accept it."

Nevertheless, there is a sense of 'what if'. In the intervening years, bands who have taken their blueprint and run with it – from Tesseract to Chimpspanner – have enjoyed great success. Sikth were ahead of their time. Surely, if they'd stuck it out, they could have reaped the benefits of their own innovation?

"I don't feel bitter at all," says Mikee. "I feel like it had to happen when it did. I can't pretend to be into something and I don't think it's right to just do music just for the sake of it. There has to be passion in it. I kind of lost my drive for the whole thing, so I wanted to do something different. And that's why I left. So you're right, I think we would have been a lot bigger if we'd kept going. But my head was telling me I needed a break, and so I took a break."

> "I don't feel bitter at all. It's not right to do music just for the sake of it – there has to be passion in it"
>
> MIKEE HAS NO REGRETS ABOUT LEAVING SIKTH

"It'd be too easy for us to feel some sort of bitterness or 'What if?'" adds Dan, "but I believe in fate, everything's in its place for a reason. In a way you could argue that doing something that's ahead of its time is much cooler. Even if you're a slightly smaller band when it comes to record sales, if you've had an influence on other bands I feel more proud of that."

There is an upside to the personal friction. Their singular sound could only ever have come from six men stubbornly pulling in different directions. That's why it crackles with energy and defies expectations. According to Mikee, they may never have harnessed quite so much electricity if life within their ranks had been more harmonious.

"We're all totally different people," he notes. "We're all pushing in different directions and I think that's why it fits with such an odd-sounding band. But I always had it in my head that I want to make something different. I never, ever want to do music that just sounds like loads of other bands."

"Me and Pin listened to lots of extreme metal when we were younger," adds Dan. "We were Pantera and Metallica freaks, but we listened to loads of death metal too. We were never into all the bravado that went with death metal, but we were into the riffs and the technicality and talent. But we wanted to do something extreme *and* melodic. We wanted to write music people can embrace, but it took a bit more of a listen than your average metal."

People were embracing it, and Sikth have been bombarded with emails and tweets from fans begging them to come back. And yet, they never disappeared completely. Justin and Dan Weller work as producers, the latter putting his creative spin on Enter Shikari's *A Flash Flood Of Colour* album and working on his own new band, In Colour, with Dan Tompkins of Tesseract fame. Pin, now based in Manchester, is a member of progressive metallers Aliases, while James plays bass with Frank Carter's post-Gallows band, Pure Love. As for Mikee, after working with Iron Maiden's Adrian Smith and Dan Foord in Primal Rock Rebellion, he went to Japan to find himself. He'd fallen in love with the country when Sikth supported Anthrax at Fujirock in 2004.

"In 2012 I went there in search of new inspiration," he explains. "I feel more connected to that country than to anywhere I've been. I think it's the energy. I felt like I really belonged there, and when I came back to England it was really hard."

He met a singer named Yuuri there, and formed a band called Outpatients. These projects are each bandmember's main focus. So it's back to baby steps for Sikth. One gig, no new material. See how it goes. But if past form is anything to go on, hopes that the metal bug will bite them again don't seem too outlandish.

Justin Hill has his eye on you

Pin – will it be justice for all?

Dan Weller finds hidden strength (it was buried in the deck)

"We always wanted it to be something where people would say, 'Fuck, how did they do that?!'" says Dan. "So the fact that bands now, more than 10 years after we started, are influenced by us does give me a really proud feeling. We had a real conviction in what we were doing, and a real belief that it would be slightly ahead of its time. The fact that it✠ still relevant now is proof of that for us."

SIKTH PLAY DOWNLOAD THIS JUNE. THE REISSUE OF *DEATH OF A DEAD DAY* IS OUT LATER THIS YEAR VIA BASICK

Sikth: the first, but not last, word in tech metal

VISIONS OF DISORDER

THE DJENT ELITE PAY THEIR DUES TO THE TECH-METAL PIONEERS...

Misha Mansoor
PERIPHERY

Misha: card-carrying Sikth fanboy

"Sikth are one of my favourite bands of all time, and a very important and special bunch of musicians. They were massively ahead of their time, and gained a lot of attention from the industry as a result. They have spawned a lot of copycats, but none that truly capture the essence of what made Sikth so special in the first place. One aspect of Sikth that I absolutely love is how they manage to pull off technical riffs in a way that makes it seem like being technical was never the priority. The riffs and parts are definitely virtuosic, but all I would take away on my initial listens was how playfully musical the parts were without fully appreciating the skill it'd take to pull the songs off. Adding their quirky, adventurous, almost theatrical vocalists to all of that makes for a band without peer, even over a decade later."

Paul Ortiz
CHIMP SPANNER

"Sikth were probably the first tech metal band I ever heard and one of the few I really got into. Even in the time since they disbanded, there hasn't been anything that comes close to touching *The Trees Are Dead...* or *Death Of A Dead Day*. Those albums are still a masterclass in the style. I wouldn't say they're the most obvious of my influences, but their music has always served as a reminder that I can always push it a bit further; be a bit more melodic, or a bit wilder. Kind of an antidote to my tendency to be reserved ha ha! I'm beyond excited that I get to see them live again, and that this whole new wave of fans will get to experience them and be inspired by them for the first time. I think it's what we've all secretly been waiting for, and what we've all needed!"

Jay Postones
TESSERACT

"Sikth were a pretty big influence on me. I remember first seeing the video for *How May I Help You?* on MTV2 back in the day and wondering what the hell was going on. It wasn't music – and if it was it was fucking weird. But then something changed and by the end of the song I was hooked. I remember looking them up online and discovered they'd released two EPs, both of which I had to own immediately. Sikth really were the catalyst band for me to get into tech metal – something which in 2002 wasn't even a thing yet. They were creating it and I had great difficulty convincing my nu metal friends and bandmates that this was the direction metal was heading in – for me it was a new and exciting genre and it was the music I wanted to play. Now EVERY band is a tech metal band. I blame Sikth. They're awesome."

Rody Walker
PROTEST THE HERO

"I was first introduced to Sikth's music in the winter of 2007. We were playing some terrible show in southern Ontario somewhere, and our guitarist approached me with a burned CD that had 'Sikth' scribbled across its face. He informed me that I must listen to it promptly, and we both skirted out to the van. We sat in the freezing cold, huddled together and began to listen to what would turn out to be *The Trees Are Dead & Dried Out...* When it was over we rushed back in the venue to retrieve our bassist, escorted him out to the van and listened to the whole damn thing over again. Thus began our fandom of Sikth. Not too long after that we were offered a tour in the UK with them. On the piss-poor advice of our dimwit manager (who had his head so far up his own ass he couldn't tell shit from Shinola), we turned the tour down. We consider that one of our biggest regrets as a band, and fired that knucklehead before he could damage our dreams any further."

Chimp Spanner's Paul: counting down the days 'til Download

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Architects, beaming up to a bright future

FIVE YEARS AGO, ARCHITECTS WERE POISED TO BECOME BRITAIN'S BIGGEST METAL BAND. IT DIDN'T QUITE HAPPEN, BUT TODAY FINDS THEM FULL OF HOPE.

WORDS: TERRY BEZER / **PICS:** KEVIN NIXON & MAGICTORCH

BRAVE NEW WORLD

Return to form. If there is a more hackneyed and clichéd term thrown around today then you know where to find us across social media to let us know what it is, but this particular expression is one that really sticks in the craw. Don't get us wrong, there are plenty of bands who could do with an actual kick up the arse after years of duff releases and who desperately need a "return to form". Often, you'll read that a band have *unleashed* a great album at the time of release, only to read about their *return to form* a few years later. Contradictory? Absolutely. It's a term that you'll doubtlessly read next to Architects in the coming months, but the truth is something far less sensationalist. That truth is that, since they released *Nightmares* as teenagers nearly eight years ago, Architects have been one of the most reliably consistent and widely respected bands in contemporary UK metal. The reason that you'll read the words 'return to form' attached to their stunning new album *Lost Together // Lost Forever* is that just a few short years ago, when they were on the verge of leading the charge for the more 'scene' (bleurgh!) side of UK metal and on the cover of this very magazine, Architects shifted styles to something… let's say more *palatable* on 2011's *The Here And Now*. The common consensus is that Architects softened their sound to appeal to the masses and monumentally dropped the ball in doing so. It seems like a fairly valid case for the prosecution, but the actuality is something far more noble and punk rock in its truest sense.

"People often think that, but it's not the case at all," explains frontman Sam Carter, one of the most straight-talking and bullshit-free people it's possible to interview. "If we'd have just repeated what we did on *Hollow Crown*, that would have been to sell out. The truth was none of us were listening to heavy music at that time and we made an album that was true to ourselves. Some bands can make that transition well; Thrice are the first band that come to mind. But we knew we'd made a mistake. It was a selfish record for us to make because it was totally for us and shied away from what we're better at and what seems to be what people like about our band. I still can't watch the video for *Heartburn* because it feels like looking at someone else."

> "WE'RE NOT A BAND MADE TO PLAY SLOWER MUSIC"
>
> SAM FEELS HIS BAND HAVE REDISCOVERED THEIR TRUE IDENTITY

At that point in time, Architects were unquestionably the band tipped to smash down the walls in that scene and take things to dizzier heights than ever before. Since then, Bring Me The Horizon have gone on to become a commercial success and critics' darlings; Asking Alexandria have taken the US by storm and, even as you read this, you're far more likely to see the hype machine buzzing around Bury Tomorrow than you are to see Architects being given their dues. It's also been a weird period for that scene where the likes of Black Veil Brides and Sleeping With Sirens have captured the mainstream's attention, leaving Architects surely scratching their heads as to what has happened over the past few years and where they fit in in today's landscape.

"I have to admit we have been guilty of looking at other bands and going, 'Why not us? Why can't that be us getting all of those opportunities and have people giving us an easier ride?'" says Sam, straight as you like. "Something that we've become comfortable with is that we are not one of those bands. We don't write those kind of choruses. A lot of the bands who've been in that position are pop bands compared to us. We are a technical metal band. We play heavy music and play shows where I'll jump off speaker stacks onto people's heads and that's not something that you'll get from your typical mainstream band. That's just us and something I'm totally happy with these days. We're really good at being a heavy band. More people care when we're making technical heavy music now than they did when we were on daytime Radio 1 and we're happier now, too. We're a heavy band and we shouldn't shy away from that. "

While they may not be the media's band de jour like they once were, among the people that really matter (that's you lot) there has been a huge Architects renaissance since that difficult period. *Daybreaker* in 2012 wasn't crammed down your throat from all directions, but fans returned to the band in their droves. It also stands up against their now seminal *Hollow Crown* album as one of the finest and technically mesmerising albums to come from our fair isle in the 21st century.

Ready to storm the teeming Metropolis

"SOME BANDS CAN MAKE THAT TRANSITION REALLY WELL, BUT WE KNEW WE'D MADE A MISTAKE"

SAM ON HIS BAND LOSING THEIR HEAVINESS

Given both of these things, it has to feel as though people have gotten over that very short blip and learned to forgive and forget at this juncture.

"I think people got over it pretty quickly," says Sam, shrugging it off. "We were, and are, still young and at that point we were figuring out what we wanted to do. We got given another chance by people after *Daybreaker* came out and on that world tour [captured on the band's fantastic *One Hundred Days* documentary – see Cash Converters, right]. We made that album and fell in love with being a heavy band again and I think we needed to make that less heavy album to really find what makes us happy as a band. When we walked out at the Warped tour in London on that touring cycle and had one of the most insane crowds we've ever played to, filled with people who'd come to see us and scream our words back at us, we knew that we were going to be OK. We're not a band made to play slower music. We're made for jumping on people's heads." (Sam actually says this quite often, so stay away from him if you ever see him sporting a curly moustache and dressed in a red plumber's outfit.)

Did the seed of doubt ever creep in that things wouldn't be OK at any point over those 18 months?

"We briefly doubted ourselves when we stopped having fun," admits Sam. "There was a little while where we weren't enjoying ourselves, but we turned it around as soon as we started writing heavier music and making ourselves happy again."

If the band were happy at that point, they must be like a dog on disco biscuits at the current point in time. Their upcoming UK tour has seen most of the dates sell out months in advance and *Naysayer*, the gut-shanking and visceral first track to be presented to the public from their upcoming opus, trended nationally on Twitter in three different guises and became the second-biggest viral song in Britain on the week of its premier. Let that last fact sink in for a minute. We are a nation, not among us but among *them*, obsessed with being spoon-fed lukewarm diarrhoea from *X-Factor* contestants and sub-standard soul music made by those who have anything but. We are a nation in which Peter fucking Andre can fill the same venues as Black Sabbath and even given facts like those, that make you want to go and run in front of a bus, a band as ruthlessly heavy and uncompromisingly unconventional as Architects can have the second-biggest track in Britain online.

"It does feel like people are more hardcore about our band than they have ever been," Sam says, his voice falling somewhere between gratitude and pride. "We've been a band for 10 years now. That's a long time today and I think there's something to be said for that. We've seen so many bands come and go on a hype thing and to be in the best place our band has been after this long is a good feeling to have."

This is a band that have cut their teeth on stages with the likes of The Dillinger Escape Plan, and have come from being teenagers impressing the shit out of bands and fans alike with their technical prowess, to amassing one of the best arsenals of tunes in Britain. Quite simply, Architects are a true national treasure and they continually pump out some of the most engaging, challenging and outright gnarly metal around. *Lost Forever // Lost Together* is no different. Don't call this a comeback.

"We've never changed that much and we've just stayed true to what we want to do as a band," Sam summarises. "Trends come and go and people are going to decide what's popular, but what's important to us is that we have always done what we want to do as a band and we're glad that people are as excited about our band as we are and it's on our terms. Being the biggest band in the world doesn't matter, there's no better feeling than that."✠

***LOST FOREVER // LOST TOGETHER* IS OUT MARCH 11 VIA EPITAPH.**
ARCHITECTS TOUR THE UK IN MARCH

CASH CONVERTERS

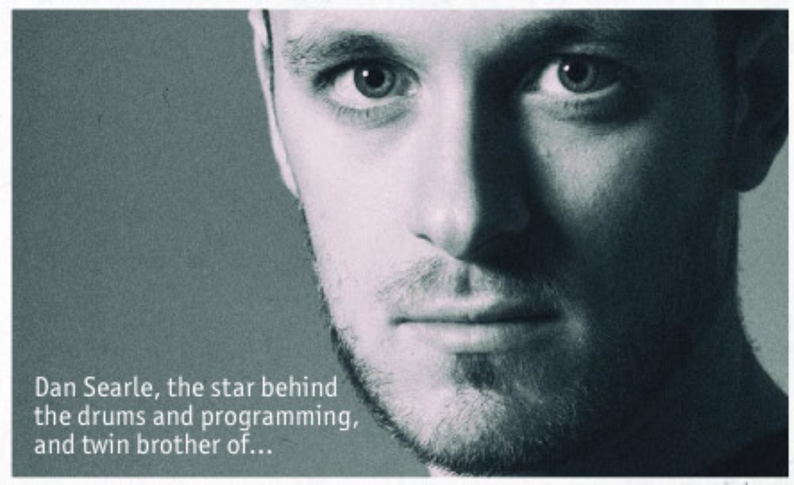
HOW ARCHITECTS MANAGED TO MAKE A DOCUMENTARY WITHOUT RECORD LABEL SUPPORT.

In October last year, Architects released their *One Hundred Days: The Story Of Architects' Almost World Tour*, which detailed the band on the promotional tour of *Daybreaker*, more than 75 shows in 25 countries in four continents. Following their split from Century Media, the band chose to source finances using the crowdfunding platform Indiegogo.

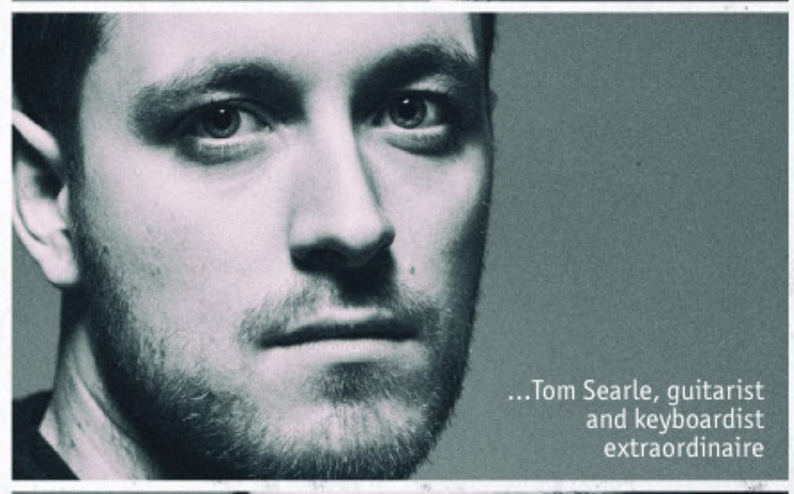
"I think that crowdsourcing is an amazing thing," beams Sam. "It's a great way for bands to see exactly what's going on and exactly how much people care about the band! It also means that fans of the band can get hold of really cool packages and they know that the money is going directly to the band. I think that it could be the future of the music industry." After setting themselves the goal of raising £30,000 in 44 days, the band ended up smashing the target with a final figure of £40,891. Way to go, lads!

"It was an amazing feeling to beat the target and actually be able to afford to make the DVD," says Sam. "We were really flattered that so many people wanted to see what we had been up to on the tour and very proud of the final product. Tom Welsh did an amazing job directing it."

Sam Carter, the voice of Architects since 2007



Dan Searle, the star behind the drums and programming, and twin brother of...



...Tom Searle, guitarist and keyboardist extraordinaire

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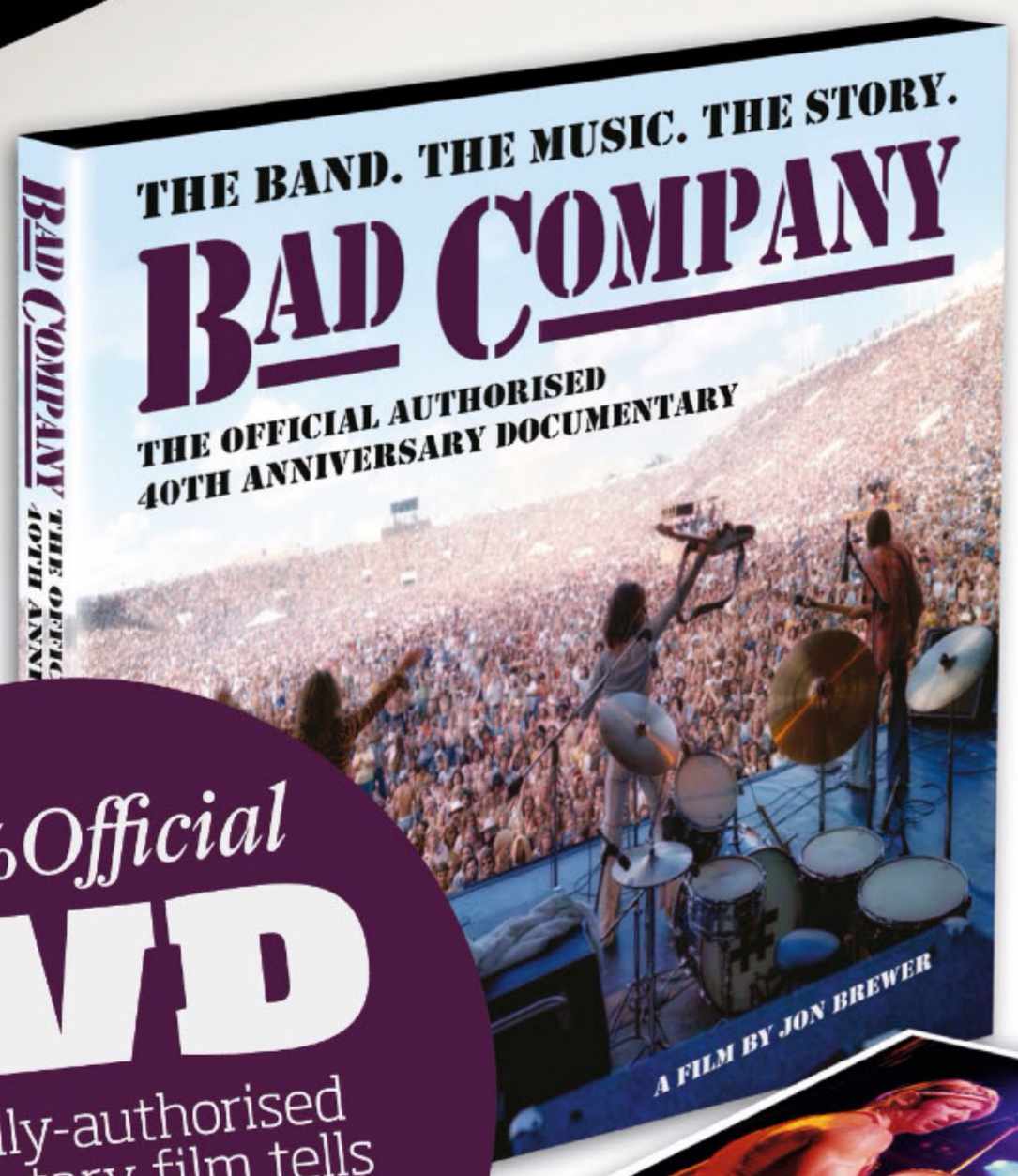

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MOOG AND MIRRORS

Their incredible time machine will launch us far into a distant future. But Bigelf mastermind Damon Fox warns us it ain't gonna be pretty.

WORDS: KEN McINTYRE

There's a hazy gauze of mystery swirling around LA prog-doom eccentrics Bigelf, and it's been that way for decades. The fact is, the band have released four albums in 20 years. All of them have been spectacular. One of them was a concept record about how evil the record industry is. The new one, *Into The Maelstrom*, is about death, rebirth and time travel. Everything else is speculation, most of it centred on the premise that Bigelf's elusive leader Damon Fox is a sort of prog-rock Axl Rose, a megalomaniacal control freak in a top hat who, on a whim, fired his entire band shortly after the artistic triumph of 2008's *Cheat The Gallows* album and is, as we speak, cackling away in a dungeon somewhere, plotting further rock'n'roll disturbances. It's not a bad back story, really. You can smell the vintage velvet, Cognac and evil-bastard moustache wax from here. But it's just not true.

"I didn't fire anybody," sighs Damon. "There was just a lot of friction in the band. People just weren't getting along and really, there was no reason to go to therapy to try and fix it. What would be the outcome? Metallica went to therapy because there's a fuckin' $50million machine backing them up. So, it all just came to a standstill. We got dropped from our label and we just lost momentum. We weren't a machine like Dream Theater or Mastodon. We have a cool brand, but it wasn't big enough to sustain us. There are just times when things get bigger than the people involved in a small unit of a music group, and the universe has a bigger plan. The universe just took me, and it made it impossible for me to be the captain of the ship. That speaks volumes to me, because the whole fuckin' thing just shut down as soon as I stopped saying 'Charge!'"

With his life's work on hiatus, possibly forever, Damon weighed his options. "I dunno, I figured I could do some other musical-related things," he says. "I was touring with Lisa Marie Presley, I was getting into some production, I was tinkering with some soundtrack stuff. I figured I could just take a few years to let the seeds grow."

And that's pretty much what happened. But just as there is no Bigelf without Damon Fox, there is also no Damon Fox without Bigelf. Eventually he reached out to his friend Mike Portnoy, who had just ended his tenure as Dream Theater's drummer. The two began working in the studio together, and *Into The Maelstrom* took shape. Damon's longtime cohort Duffy Snowhill played bass, but the vast majority of the album was created by Damon and Mike's drum tracks.

"It was all done very quickly," Damon says. "It was a really different experiment for me. I was able to get up at three in the morning and work on vocal tracks. I allowed myself to be reckless. I did whatever was necessary to stay inspired and to try to do something different on this record, to try and shake up and break the machine and start over, to see if there was another way to be Bigelf and to change at the same time."

The result is *Into The Maelstrom*, a doom-powered slab of retro-futurism that drags you through the depths of despair while bathing your ears in bright white light. In its own bizarre way, it might be the most upbeat album Bigelf's ever done. "Really?" laughs Damon. "Because the record's dark as fuck. I have three songs on there about a dead friend. But there might be some truth to it. Somebody told me it sounded like 'a party for the end of the world'. I wasn't trying to make it more upbeat, I was just trying to get a different energy. But maybe it's the tension, or maybe it's just the freeing spirit on the record that makes it feel more upbeat."

It's also Bigelf's most cinematic album, full of vivid future-shocks like cosmic funk jammer *Alien Frequency* and the rocket-reducing *Hypersleep*. "When I was going out to put these futuristic apocalyptic themes into the record and get away from this grandiose vaudevillian carnival thing that *Cheat The Gallows* had, I realised that I think the future has a *Star Wars* element to it. It's a used future, a retro future, a vintage future. It's kinda like the first *Alien* movie. There are spaceships, but they're really dirty. In a lot of movies there's a clean, sterile look to the future. I don't think that's how the future looks. I think the future is dirty. That's the kinda shit I was trying to figure out when I was making this record. I was definitely thinking about *Alien*."

Since their inception as glammy hard rock weirdos in 1991, Bigelf has always been about duality. They are futurists in vintage denim straddling two different worlds: the hard-drinking, hard-partying world of bearded, devil-baiting doom rock, and the gear-obsessed, buttoned-up adults who make up the vast majority of the progressive rock audience. For three decades now, they've attempted to merge these two worlds and become the arena-wrecking juggernauts Damon knows they are destined to be. With *Into The Maelstrom*, they might finally be on their way. One thing's for certain, the climate is right. Prog's hip again, long hair's back, every band wants to sound like 1974, and space is most definitely the place. And that's been Bigelf's angle for almost 25 years. "It could finally be my year," laughs Damon. "It's gottta be. I've never seen so many retro-looking rock bands in my life. I mean, hipsters are getting into prog, beards and vintage instruments are in fashion. Shit, this is my gig!"

Time will tell. In the meantime, Damon is assembling a crack live band and plans on blanketing Europe and the UK in the next year. And this time, he's prepared for whatever happens next. "I'm like Obi-Wan Kenobi," he says. "I've got all the original tricks and ingenuity. I learned from the masters." ✠

***INTO THE MAELSTROM* IS OUT MARCH 3 VIA INSIDE OUT**

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TO WATCH
THE VIDEO

"In the movies the future looks sterile, but to me the future is dirty"

DAMON FOX HAS A VISION OF HIS OWN

Damon Fox reaches for the future

GANG WARFARE

HEADS UP. UPON A BURNING BODY ARE COMING BACK TO DESTROY THE UK – AND THEY'RE TAKING NO PRISONERS.

WORDS: MERLIN ALDERSLADE
PICS: STEPHANIE CABRAL

See? *Fucking gangsters*

Danny Leal sets tongues wagging

Fans in high places: Slipknot's Sid turned up to watch UABB's set

"OUR BAND IS THE ONE YOU GO HOME TALKING ABOUT"

DANNY'S IN NO TWO MINDS – UABB ARE HERE TO STEAL SHOWS

RE

Remember the first time you witnessed a band make that all-important leap that proved once and for all, that they had completed the evolution from "enticing new prospects" to "certified rock stars"? That moment when, be it through a song, a video or a career-defining live show, they were no longer part of an exciting new scene or leaders of an uprising of young talent, but a force entirely in their own right? Think Avenged Sevenfold shunning the makeup and hair-dye and rocking up to Download in England football shirts in 2006. Or Bring Me The Horizon booting their cynics into the stratosphere with *Sempiternal*. Goosebump-curating stuff, right?

Well, every so often a band comes along that, kinda, um, forgets about the whole "enticing new prospects" thing and pretty much lands in your lap, fully formed and ready to go. A band looking like they could out-star power your favourite arena-fillers, out-swagger the sleaziest sunset strip veterans and out-play the techiest of guitar nerd heroes. A band that, essentially, arrive as the finished article, ready to burn their way through the world and take out anyone that is silly enough to stand in their way. A band that look like *fucking gangsters*.

Alright, in the case of Upon A Burning Body, that last point is a fairly specific one, but it's one of many reasons that the Texan five-piece are unlike any other band you're likely to read about in these or any other pages. And it's in the UK that they seem to be making serious waves.

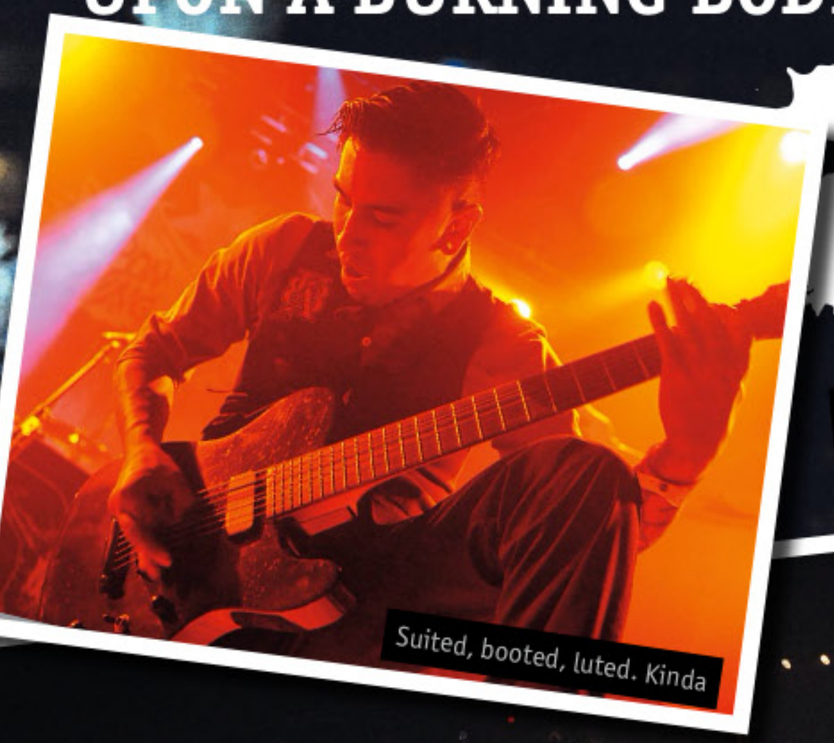
"In the States, we've toured and toured and seen us *slowly* grow, a little bit more each time we come back to a city, but we come to the UK for the first time and it's already awesome," explains UABB frontman Danny Leal of the quintet's fast-established affinity with our fair isle. "The first time we went over there, we didn't know what to expect, but we had a ton of kids turn up that were all singing our lyrics. It was like, 'Are we dreaming?' Now, we're in cool [UK] magazines, doing interviews with you guys... It just blows me away that we can do all these things having only been to the UK twice. That is why we're the most stoked about going back."

We should probably rewind a bit here. In May 2012, two months after their second studio full-length (*Red. White. Green.*) landed in a flurry of Pantera-fuelled hooks, deathcore-heavy grooves and booze-soaked chantalongs, Upon A Burning Body were booked to open up the UK's moderately-sized Slam Dunk festival, sharing a bill with the likes of Of Mice & Men and While She Sleeps – bands about to make a leap into music's wider consciousness and set to make all the headlines that weekend. Except that's not the whole story. For just after 1pm each day, at both Leeds and Hatfield's University venues, a sea of kids flooded the stage floor, cramming into the modest space available and flocking straight to the barrier to await the afternoon's openers. When UABB walked onstage, pandemonium quickly ensued, with building-levelling circle pits, seas of

Ruben gurns and bears it

Onstage at the House Of Blues, Los Angeles

UPON A BURNING BODY



Suited, booted, luted. Kinda

Sal, Rey, Danny, Ruben and Cocos with a few close friends

Sal's Miley Cyrus impersonation needs work

"Dude! What have I told you about personal space?!"

"WE'RE TRYING TO TAP INTO A MUCH LARGER AUDIENCE"

DANNY WANTS THE BAND TO GROW AND GROW

crowd-surfers and enough fist pumps to cause an earthquake creating some amazing scenes – all overseen by a band dressed like *fucking gangsters*. Needless to say, the gig made an impact, and UABB ended up being one of the bands of the entire festival. Not a bad way to make your UK bow…

"That's the name of the game," states Danny without a hint of doubt as we catch up with the singer hours before he's due to join his band-mates on a brief US jaunt with Parkway Drive. "Usually, you're touring with bands that are or maybe become your friends, and it's a good time and whatnot, but when you're onstage… My job is to make my band the band that you go home and talk about. 'Yeah, the show's cool, but that *one* band? Upon A Burning Body!' That's what I want to send people home thinking, and if we can do that, we're in pretty good shape. We've stayed in that mindset, so yes, we try to steal every single show."

And it's a habit they've kept up. With demand for the band in abundance both on these shores and back in their homeland, UABB found themselves booked on a number of enviable slots, including a well-received debut at Download that summer, as well as a Stateside stint with Trivium soon after that led to Matt Heafy personally inviting them to join the Floridian heavyweights across Europe.

"Matt's a guy that I've looked up to since *Ascendancy* came out," offers Danny somewhat humbly. "I was the kid driving from San Antonio to Austin, Texas to see those guys, and I've been a fan ever since. We did a run of dates [in America] with Trivium, and our tour manager said Matt was a fan of our band. I thought he was lying. Sure enough, it was true; Trivium brought us on their bus, we hit it off, and they got us on their UK tour. The next thing you know, we're playing a sold-out show in London."

They took their opportunity well. Stealing the show once again from under the noses of both Trivium and fellow support acts Caliban and As I Lay Dying, UABB proved once again that they are the real deal – packing a swagger and sense of showmanship rarely seen among bands at such an early stage of their career. It all ultimately means that when they finally return to the UK later this month as support to Five Finger Death Punch, you'd have to be nuts to bet against them having their name put on even more lips – and all right in time for that crucial next album.

"We're trying to tap into a much larger audience, but we definitely don't want to lose the audience that we've had the pleasure to have to date," reveals Danny of their new material. "Being in this business, you have to grow. What we're trying to do is have a nice balance for the kids who really like good musicianship, and the people that just wanna bang their heads. I think we've accomplished that on this record."

Although it's unlikely that we'll be seeing any new UABB tracks aired on this tour ("We wanna hammer it at people when they have somewhere to go and hear it"), it's fairly safe to assume that people will be talking about this band for some time to come yet. Best make sure you get down the front nice and early and prepare to get your face blown clean off. By *fucking gangsters*. ✠

UPON A BURNING BODY TOUR WITH FIVE FINGER DEATH PUNCH LATER THIS MONTH. SEE P.113 FOR DATES

SHARP-DRESSED MEN

UPON A BURNING BODY AREN'T THE ONLY SNAPPY DRESSERS IN TOWN…

AKERCOCKE

UK death metal's foremost gents, Akercocke will most importantly be remembered as legends of British extreme music, but hot damn could they also work a tie.

FLESHGOD APOCALYPSE

Italian symphonic death metallers Fleshgod Apocalypse make one of the maddest rackets we've ever heard – and their suited-and-booted live show is a spectacle.

CARDIACS

Be it Faith No More or Radiohead, few bands have influenced such a huge spectrum of artists as Cardiacs. Plus, the experimental rockers did it all looking totally badass.

GETTY

A FOREST OF STARS

Leeds' premiere psychedelic black metallers (they are, we checked) rock the Victorian Gent look like very few people in 2014 can without looking like trendy gonads.

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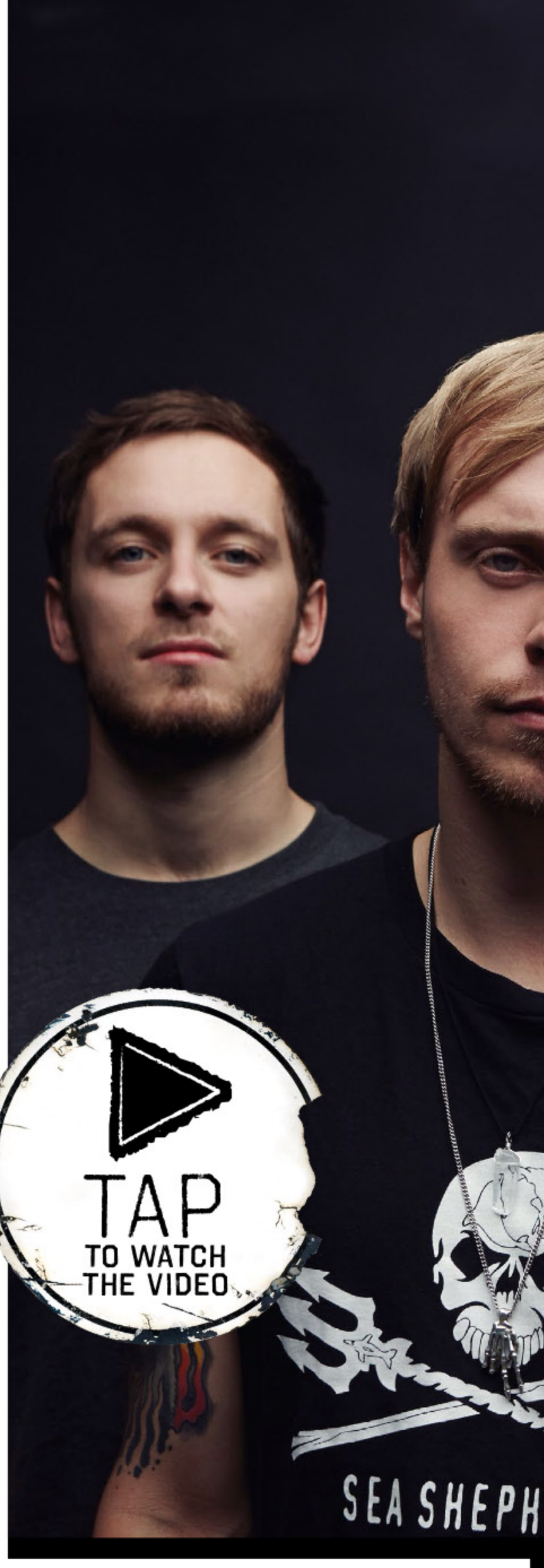
THE GOSPEL

THIS MONTH'S GOOD, BAD AND UGLY



ARCHITECTS

LOST FOREVER//LOST TOGETHER

| *EPITAPH* |

Brighton's rollercoaster metallers resurrect their mojo

It'd be a gross understatement to say Architects haven't had the easiest of rides. After bursting onto the scene with their Dillinger Escape Plan-inspired angular math-metal and technical proficiency, the Brighton quintet announced themselves as bona fide contenders with 2009's stunning *Hollow Crown*, a juggernaut that stands as one of the finest British metal albums of the last 10 years. Seemingly destined for greatness, it's tragic that its follow-up, *The Here And Now*, caused such a derailment. Despite the anthemic likes of *Day In Day Out*, the deafening cries of 'Sell-out!' greeted the drastic melodic change of direction and even saw the band themselves disowning it. It was this backs-to-the-wall situation that forged *Daybreaker* just over a year later, which thankfully not only dispelled the notion that they had lost their grit, but also showed they were still righteously pushing themselves and their sound to new, unexplored territory. Dogged by lineup changes, label troubles, dropping from tours with exhaustion and the other difficulties that present every band beneath the mainstream, it's testament to the band's desire that they've taken the disappointments on the chin and strived to forge their own path in an overpopulated, largely uninspiring metalcore scene while other, less-deserving peers reap the limelight.

Given the good will *Daybreaker* rightly produced, it's little wonder that *Lost Forever// Lost Together* settles into the tracks left by its predecessor, focusing on the same trademark style of hook-laden musicality and understated heaviness, while turning the relevant dials up a few notches. Opener *Gravedigger* encapsulates everything that's epitomised the band's output to date: impassioned vocals, infectious energy, energetic breakdowns, tight rhythmic interplay and Sam Carter's call-to-arms chorus; it's at the least an equal to anything the band have achieved before. The blastbeats and shuddering riffs of first single *Naysayer* result in one of the heaviest songs in the band's canon, but again it's the atmospheric chorus and the deeply fervent vocals that sink their teeth in deep and refuse to let go. Whether it's the ever-building rage and tight riffing of the atheistic *Broken Cross*, gang vocals and spoken-word environmental warning on *The Devil Is Near*, or more measured screaming on the atmospheric *Colony Collapse*, the ardent lyrics are as precise and moving as ever, and epitomise a band full of confidence and sounding on top of their game. A brief respite comes in the form of the vast mid-album instrumental *Red Hypergiant*, before lone guitarist Tom Searle's monolithic barrage that greets *C.A.N.C.E.R* and its abrasively chanted chorus. Though Architects have clearly shown they're no strangers to writing brilliant tunes before, esteemed producer Fredrik Nordström's sonic delivery helps each reach its potential. Though the band forgo any ballads, the brooding *Youth Is Wasted On The Young* and reflective descent of *The Distant Blue* wrap up a furious, engaging and completely uncompromising 40 minutes in classy style. The merits of *Lost Forever...* alone deserve to be applauded and cherished, but given the path Architects have had to tread it's nothing short of a genuine triumph.

8

FACT **The hashtags #R1Architects and #Naysayer trended worldwide when Radio 1's Dan P Carter asked fans to send questions for the band via twitter.**

Given the path Architects have had to tread, this is nothing short of a triumph

LAYING FOUNDATIONS

FOUR KEY ARCHITECTS CUTS

Nightmares
UNITED BY FATE – 2007

This visceral debut planted its flags in mathcore and the burgeoning tech-metal scene, and original frontman Matt Johnson's vocals only occasionally let up from his bark. *Nightmares* showed few signs of what was to come.

Hollow Crown
CENTURY MEDIA – 2009

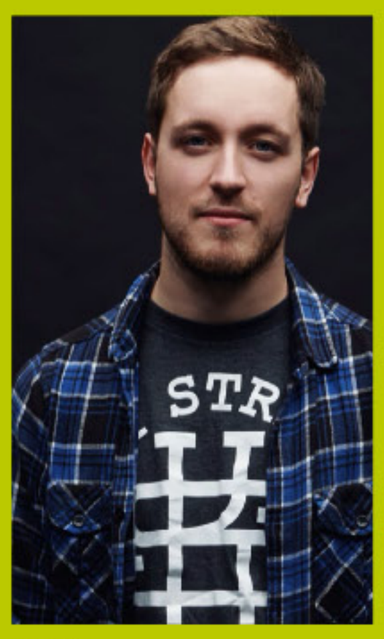
The band's early leanings were unceremoniously obliterated by *Hollow Crown*'s massive metallic riffs, crushing breakdowns and life-affirming choruses with Sam Carter stamping his authority over the album.

The Here And Now
CENTURY MEDIA – 2011

Welcomed as a genuine accomplishment by some but denounced by many fans and ultimately the band themselves, *The Here And Now*'s melodic post-hardcore anthems were seen as a step too far.

Daybreaker
CENTURY MEDIA – 2012

Comprising the different elements that had marked all previous stages of their career, *Daybreaker* was an album that crackled with fire and passion, establishing a new sound for the band to call their own.



Tom Searle

| GUITAR, KEYBOARD |

THE LYRICS ARE AMONGST THE MOST ANGRY YOU'VE WRITTEN. WHAT ISSUES ARE THEY DEALING WITH?

"We didn't want to just focus on the political thing like on *Daybreaker*. It's still in there but I wanted it to be a little more human. We're all fragile and, if anything, the terrible things happening around the world make you scared rather than angry. Maybe the anger comes later. There are songs about Fukushima, cancer, religion, losing youth, fear of failure... all sorts."

WHAT DOES THE ALBUM TITLE RELATE TO?

"We had a few potential titles but when we were all in the studio we were individually going through tough times while all crammed under the same roof. I felt enormous pressure and started to crack. What helped keep it all together was knowing I was with other people going through their own ordeals. Sometimes you feel trapped in your own head, buried by your own dysfunctional thoughts. When you look at what's going on in the world, it can be fucking daunting, but we're all in it together."

WHAT DID FREDRIK NORDSTRÖM BRING TO THE ALBUM?

"He knows how to make a great-sounding metal record! Our main man was Henrik Udd (honourable mention for assistant engineer Johan Henriksson!). Henrik was producer, engineer, mixer, the lot! He totally understood what we wanted. He knew where to step in and where to leave us make our own decisions. He also has the patience of a saint, which is priceless when you're working with Architects!"

Sublime album; not-so-worthy re-release

TAP TO WATCH THE VIDEO

PANTERA

FAR BEYOND DRIVEN 20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

| RHINO |

The Texan terrors' game-changing masterpiece remastered

Philip H Anselmo

| VOCALS |

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE LEGACY OF *...DRIVEN* IS?

"It's still the heaviest record ever to come in at #1 on the Billboard charts. It marks a change in the musical climate of the 90s and an important message from us; we were doing things our way. We were committed to making each LP heavier and *...Driven* was affirmation of this."

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF ABOUT THE ALBUM?

"I'm proud we did things our way. Some reviewers felt we were wasting our talent by playing a more aggressive style as apposed to doing something in a commercial vein. I'm most proud of our diehard audience, too. If we'd gone down a more commercial avenue, we'd have lost the respect of our fans. We didn't flake out on them, and they didn't flake on us. The rest is history..."

For a time, Pantera were the greatest metal band on the planet. Their ascendancy came at a point when the genre was faltering. Though *The Black Album* had propelled Metallica into the mainstream, the ubiquity of the Seattle 'grunge' sound had many of their peers running scared; Megadeth and Slayer already sounded like their own tribute acts, Maiden were struggling to adjust to post-Dickinson life and the emerging underground scenes in Florida and Gothenburg were conspiring to make the old gods look toothless and impotent. While Sepultura, Biohazard and Fear Factory would all drive adrenaline spikes into metal's black heart, it was Pantera – and specifically their seventh album, *Far Beyond Driven* – who created the true blueprint for the future.

Twenty years on from its March 1994 release, *Far Beyond Driven* remains a staggeringly abrasive listen. The most extreme album ever to top the US Billboard chart, it is unrelenting in its ferocity, utterly unrepentant in its savagery. From its cover art – a metal drill penetrating a human skull – to its songtitles (*Slaughtered*, *Strength Beyond Strength*, *I'm Broken*), *...Driven* is an album that telegraphs its intentions, but nothing can truly prepare the listener for what it is to come. Number One albums aren't meant to contain lines such as *'I fucked your girlfriend last night/ While you snored and drooled I fucked your love'*, the horrifying opening couplet from *Good Friends And A Bottle Of Pills*. Rising metal bands with their eyes on the prize aren't advised to pen songs as vicious, strident and ugly as *Slaughtered*. By comparison, the likes of *Fucking Hostile* and *Walk* sound cuddly.

The work of a band unified like a clenched fist, *Far Beyond Driven* is nonetheless Phil Anselmo's finest hour. "A long time ago I never knew myself," the singer acknowledges on *Becoming*, initiating an unforgiving therapy session during which ex-girlfriends, old pals and all fears are cast aside as Anselmo strives for the Nietzschean übermensch ideal. On *5 Minutes Alone* and *Shedding Skin* in particular, Anselmo is terrifying, Mike Tyson with a Shure mic, all muscle, machismo and menace. He's abetted by stunning virtuoso performances from Dimebag Darrell: never as flashy as his hero Eddie Van Halen, here the guitarist's meticulously deployed range of tones, textures, bite and crunch serves as a masterclass for any aspiring axeman.

The only disappointment here then comes in the half-arsed, lazy manner in which this landmark release has been repackaged. The two-disc set includes an incomplete document of the band's 1994 Donington set, omitting opener *A New Level*, and nothing else: no demos, no rarities, nothing to entice anyone who already owns the original album to shell out once more. When one thinks of the care and attention lavished upon, for example, Nirvana's 20th anniversary edition of *In Utero*, such treatment is negligent verging on the disrespectful. Still, *Far Beyond Driven* hardly needs ribbons and bows: a high-water mark for 90s metal, it remains an essential part of any self-respecting metalhead's education.

9

PAUL BRANNIGAN

FACT ***Far Beyond Driven* is the first Pantera album where Darrell Abbott was credited as 'Dimebag'. The original cover featured a drill impaling an anus.**

Alaya

GRACE

| BASICK |

Classy and catchy debut from exciting djent trio

Chicago's Alaya have all the requisite requirements to position themselves atop the djent pile, including blistering musicality, hydra-headed compositions, downtuned riffing and dizzying rhythms, made apparent on *White Noise*'s angular dissonance and *Entropy*'s percussive punches and meandering sweeps. The trio also understand the importance of creating coherent, meaningful songs and engaging soundscapes that are as appealing to the casual listener as the aficionado. From the riffs and hook-laden chorus of the atmospheric *Inside* to the crushing grooves and intricate rhythms of the title track, *Grace* is both instantly satisfying and opaque enough to deliver surprises with repeated listens. Frontman Evan Graham Dunn's range may not be to everyone's tastes but there's no denying the effective vocal harmonies over the majestic three-part *Haunted*, which weaves the album together with delicate keys and ambience amidst the taut guitar playing. Sublime proof that there's far more to the djent scene than simply who can play the most complicated riff.

7

ADAM REES

Battleaxe

HEAVY METAL SANCTUARY

| SPV/STEAMHAMMER |

North-East NWOBHM veterans make a sprightly return

From their earliest appearance on 1982's *Roxcalibur* compilation, these Sunderland bruisers have been the most rigorously archetypal specimen of that hallowed acronym NWOBHM, roughly melding Motörhead, AC/DC and Judas Priest, singing songs about playing live, driving cars, shagging birds and medieval warfare. From early triumphs in Wearside boozers, through a seven-inch, two LPs and a *Friday Rock Show* session, Battleaxe opened for Saxon, Anvil and Twisted Sister in their heyday, but the foursome – always featuring singer Dave King and bassist Brian Smith – dissolved in the late 80s, sporadically reforming with threats of a third album. After 30 years, here it is; no wonder the opening title track sounds so sparky and animated, these grizzled veterans champing at the bit to bang heads and shred frets again. Much of this material is rather over-familiar, but Battleaxe's MO was already well-worn by 1983; the trump card is Dave King's raucous voice, sounding more powerful, spirited and distinctive than ever, and the wild, snorting attitude remains undimmed.

7

CHRIS CHANTLER

Bigelf

INTO THE MAELSTROM

| INSIDE OUT |

Psych-prog voyagers bring Mike Portnoy along for wild ride

We often wonder what substances inspired the music we're listening to; in this case, whatever it was, it was *strong*. Opening track *Incredible Time Machine* sets the agenda well, as old dusty computers whirr back to life and propel us into galaxies beyond where the past and future have become one and the same, and culminating in a bombastic blur of heavy psychedelia and crackling fuzz. Already the fourth full-length from the LA-based progressive doomers feels like their most batshit insane offering yet, and you can almost taste the sticky fumes emerging from ringleader Damon Fox's top hat. *Hypersleep* could be Electric Wizard covering Rush but with added theremin, while *Already Gone* and *Alien Frequency* sound more akin to the bohemian glam of early 70s Alice Cooper and David Bowie. *Into The Maelstrom*'s grand ambitions are matched by an even grander execution that will make this one of the most unforgettable records of the year.

8

AMIT SHARMA

Blackberry Smoke

THE WHIPPOORWILL

| EARACHE |

Southern rock heroes finally set up camp in the UK

Two years ago, when *Hammer* asked Gary Rossington about bands equipped to follow in the footsteps of Lynyrd Skynyrd, two names sprang to the lips of their final surviving original member. His first tip, Black Stone Cherry, are established in this country, but with Blackberry Smoke it's a different tale. The Georgia-based quintet have delivered three albums in a 14-year career, this being the first to be released domestically. Full of delightful songs with the potential to become valued old friends, *The Whippoorwill* traverses various moods, from *Shaking Hands With The Holy Ghost*'s ZZ Top-esque barroom boogie to *Six Ways To Sunday*, which jitterbugs along with The Black Crowes to the blue-collar melancholy of *One Horse Town*, and at its most laid back, *I Ain't Got The Blues* sounds like a whiskey-soaked porch jam at sunset.

8

DAVE LING

CHTHONIC

IÁN-BÚ

| SPINEFARM/EAGLE VISION |

Excellent package for a thoughtful band

Rarely do the DVD extras outshine the main event but Chthonic's latest release is an exception, beginning with a main-stage live show filmed at Formoz Festival in Taipei and ending with a generous set of videos and mini-documentaries. Their performance is chaotic, immersive and intense, theatrically enhanced by the addition of the Chai Feng Traditional Orchestra and Taiwanese opera singer Tang Mei-Yun during *Defenders Of Bú-Tik Palace*. *Southern Cross* is a complete shred-fest while *Oceanquake* and *Supreme Pain For The Tyrant* pinpoint their unique hybrid of black metal and Taiwanese folk. But for a true understanding of this enigmatic collective, delve into the DVD extras that feature five videos from last year's *Bú-Tik*, presenting martial arts, 1930s Shanghai and aqua theatrics with interviews and behind-the-scenes footage. This reveals the band to be bold, intelligent and revolutionary through the layers of thinking and research that go into the films, their political defiance siphoned through their art and one final modest chinwag between the understated beauty queen of black metal, Doris Yeh and director Vince Chuang. Much more than a mere money-spinner.

7

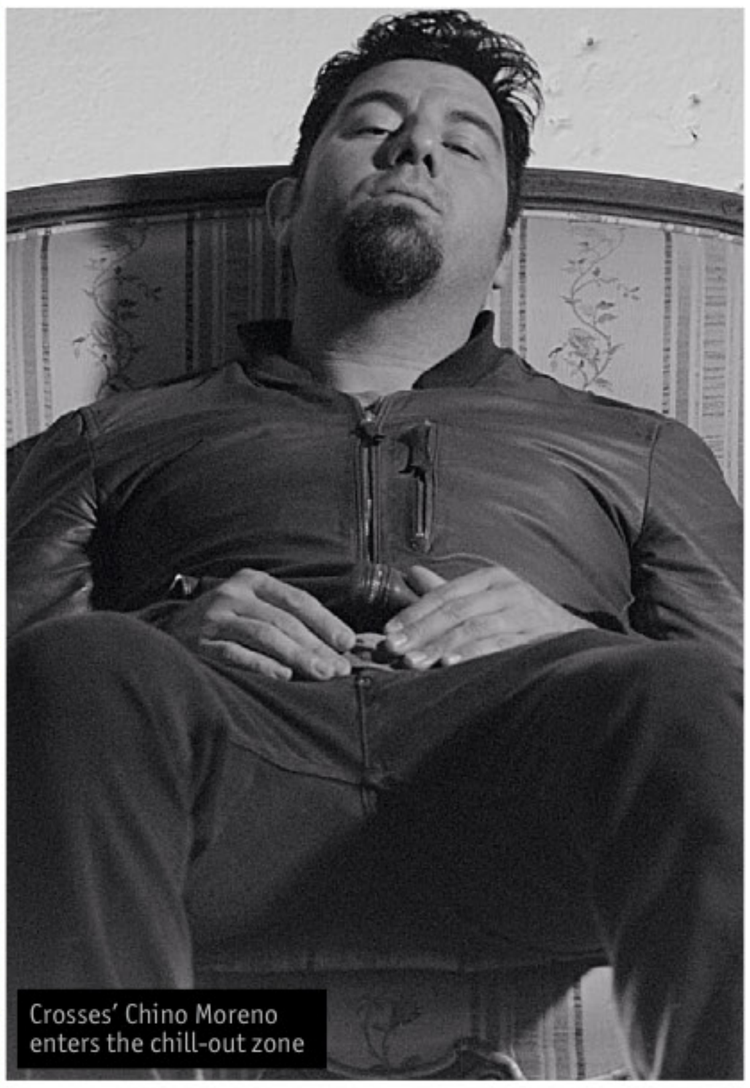
HOLLY WRIGHT

THIS MONTH IN METAL

ALBUM MONOLITHS FROM THE VAULT

EMPEROR | *IX Equilibrium* | CANDLELIGHT | APRIL 1999 |

Emperor's third album presented a real dream team ticket: some of the band's darkest and confrontational music with a clean, sharp production. *Hammer*'s reviewer, Malcolm Dome, could scarcely contain himself, issuing a mark of 9/10 and declaring: "At long last the fathers of the Norwegian black metal movement have thrown off the shackles of church burnings, sensationalism and silly makeup. Now it's the music that matters. Emperor have reinforced their claim to being among the very best that this genre has to offer." Don't miss Emperor playing one of their final-ever shows at this summer's Bloodstock Festival.



Crosses' Chino Moreno enters the chill-out zone

†††

†††

| SELF-RELEASED |

Chino heads down the ambient highway

Joined by Far man Shaun Lopez and Chuck Doom, ††† (aka Crosses) is Chino Moreno's most high-profile project outside of Deftones since Team Sleep, and it's an album of ambient and darker cinematic soundscapes. While Chino's hypnotic, otherworldly tones are the album's defining characteristic, that's not to discount the incredible music below. There's barely a rock guitar in sight as the album floats along on dense electronic beats and subtle yet engaging instrumentation. The only argument you can make for this being a 'rock' record is the bandmembers' day jobs. With influences from fields as afar as The Velvet Underground and latter-day Kanye West, this is an album built for late-night plays and a serene mood. If you read that as a metaphor for boring, it isn't. *Bitches Brew* is the best song on offer, sounding like something that could soundtrack an intense sex scene from a David Lynch movie. It's the aural equivalent of being orally pleasured while being suffocated with a velvet pillow.

7

TERRY BEZER

Album That Changed My Life

ELIN LARSSON
Blue Pills

FLEETWOOD MAC
Then Play On

"When I first heard this album, my life took a happier direction. It also shows that it's all about the notes you pick playing and singing, and that the emotion is the most important thing to capture in music."

Caesars Rome

BELIEVERS

| LOCK & KEY |

Lush, expansive post-hardcore sounds from the Valleys

A decade ago South Wales was a breeding ground for young bands jumping on the emo/post-hardcore bandwagon, with mixed results at best. Thankfully this Bridgend quartet are spearheading a new wave that has more in common with the atmospheric soundscapes and adventurous structures of Devil Sold His Soul than the fringes and break-up anthems of yesteryear. Sophomore effort *Believers* is full of flowing melodies that envelope the likes of *Earth From Space* and the melancholic *Heavy Heart*, and punctuate Jonathan Hopkins' rich vocals. *Haunt* and *Old World Continents* expertly employ riffs and angular chords that conjure memories of Thrice at their most dramatic, while the title-track's nod to Brand New is another influence worn proudly on their sleeves, yet also showing a determined desire to take these influences and keep pushing things forward. While *Things We Lost In The Fire* and *A Ghost In Our Lives* opt to pursue glorious, ever-expanding melodies, the more conventional choruses of *Sincerities* and *Stay Gold* are the most instantly gratifying, proving that Caesars Rome also have great songwriting chops to add to their ear for a delicate tune.

7

ADAM REES

Carnifex

DIE WITHOUT HOPE

| NUCLEAR BLAST |

Metalcore Californians hit their stride on album number five

Carnifex have, like a fine wine or George Clooney, improved considerably with age. The breakdown-centric bluster that defined their deathcore in the early days has developed into something altogether more rounded. Sweeping, symphonic atmospherics, a more melodious approach to riffing and even some solos have rendered them less gut-wrenchingly boring than they once were. Indeed, a brief hiatus has honed these instincts further and *Die Without Hope* is arguably their best work to date. Rib-cracking opener *Salvation Is Dead* sets the pace from the word go with Scott Lewis's gnarled scream sounding like an irate kraken who's just found out that someone is rogering his missus behind his barnacled back. From there on it's full-throttle, double-barrelled stuff with hints of As Blood Runs Black and The Black Dahlia Murder mashed into a package that has both venom and technical distinction to burn. Carnifex aren't exactly re-inventing any wheels here but they deliver more than enough breadth to make this a frenetic, blood-spattered listen.

7

TOM DOYLE

Centiment

STREET OF RAGE

| SELF-RELEASED |

Ex-Inme frontman puts anthems through the eight-bit grinder

One of the most amazing things about music is that nobody can ever truly be written off. Centiment is a new project from Inme's Dave McPherson and it kicks all kind of ass. *Street Of Rage* is packed with powerful riffing and melodic vocals that are all lovingly wrapped in eight-bit electronics. The latter of these elements can often be an unwelcome and distracting gimmick (nobody wants *Castlevania* alongside their metal) but occasionally, when applied properly, adds a wholly modern spin on what are, essentially, a collection of massive hard rock anthems. Indeed, strip away those electronic elements and you're left with an album that falls somewhere between the harder and less pretentious side of Muse, the spit-and-sawdust fire of Enter Shikari and if 30 Seconds To Mars had some bollocks to their guitar tone. Dave's vocals remain an acquired taste but this is a challenging, creative affair that never lets your attention waver because of the sheer number of ideas applied here.

7

TERRY BEZER

Animus

FALL OF THE ELITE

| SELF-RELEASED |

An absurdly heavy, not to mention often technically bewildering debut EP from this youthful Dundee-based tech/death/metalcore crew. From opener *Damnation* to the title track, *Fall Of The Elite* delivers on much of their undoubted promise. Keep an eye on this lot. **[7]**

STEPHEN HILL

Blues Pills

LIVE AT ROCKPALAST

| NUCLEAR BLAST |

These slick and soulful Swedes with a big bottom end might be musically par for the Scandic retro-rock course, but they're elevated into timelessness by vocalist Elin Larsson's startling, powerful and poignant performance. **[7]**

TOM COOKSEY

Coldrain

THROUGH CLARITY

| SELF-RELEASED |

Slick but spiteful debut EP from Japanese rockers that feels as futuristic as anything you would expect from their homeland, although its bombastic, radio-friendly approach leaves you wishing they had a tad more soul. **[6]**

STEPHEN HILL

Coil/Nine Inch Nails

RECOILED

COLD SPRING

Industrial occultists work their magic on Trent Reznor

Trent Reznor showed his left-field Anglophiliac tendencies by working with David Bowie and Aphex Twin but perhaps his most worthwhile English collaboration was with Coil, a psychedelic occult electronic group (led by Peter 'Sleazy' Christopherson of industrial pioneers Throbbing Gristle and Jhonn Balance). They had a track record for turning in material that was too much for those who had commissioned it – their score for *Hellraiser* was so frightening it was cut from the film – and it's easy to see why most of these remixes have never been released by a major label. Coil start from the bottom of Trent's spiral (a muscular and grinding *Gave Up*) before working downwards beyond mere concepts of good and evil and the politeness of Western composition into the primal subconscious (a psilocybin-fried, ectoplasmic take on *Downward Spiral*). It's a systematic deconstruction of NIN over the course of 40 minutes until they actually become Coil (on the aptly named *Eraser*) – a narcotic overloaded, disorientating but strangely joyous glimpse into the maws of death itself. Masterful.

9

JOHN DORAN

Comeback Kid

DIE KNOWING

| VICTORY |

Hardcore punk Canadians amp up the aggro

One of Comeback Kid's biggest strengths has always been their songwriting. Even in the days of their original vocalist over four albums ago, the Canadians' songs owned when it came to drawing fans into the nearest pit. A cohesive marriage of the driven, irate and melodic, *Die Knowing* shows CK staying true to their sound but progressing into more dynamic turf and cranking the brutality up a few notches. The title track is immediately convincing with minimalist guitarwork, killer yells and emphatic gang shouts, but it's only a taste of how good this gets. *Sink In* is born to be screamed along to, *Should Know Better* gives bassist Matthew Keil his moment of old-school hardcore glory, and *Full Swing* sees Scott Wade return on guest vocals. There is not a filler to be seen and, recorded with Shai Hulud's Kyle Black, the sound is as worthy as the songwriting. Comeback Kid play it like they mean it and the raw angry passion and positive party energy they unleash is impossible to resist.

8

NIK YOUNG

Fisthammer

INFALLIBLE

| SELF-RELEASED |

US death metallers start to reach outside the box

Two years on from the release of their warmly received debut album, *Devour All You See*, this Philadelphia-based death metal three-piece unleash their second offering and it's a record that, in places, lives up to their imposing band moniker. Kicking off with *Arithmos Tou Theriou*, the track crams many emotions and musical ideas into the nearly seven-minute-long effort and it's a ballsy and ambitious way to open an album. However, not all of *Infallible* matches the bravery and inspired insanity of that initial salvo and the likes of *Doom Of The Gods Part II, Evoking The Wrath Of The Revenants* and recent single *The Coven* see Fisthammer tread more familiar territory, yielding powerful but predictable results. Still, the Sikth-esque *Automaton Of Flesh* and the kitchen-sink epic *Conjuration Of The Fire God* showcase a band with some truly impressive musical chops and if they really loosen the restraints for album number three they could be very special indeed.

6

EDWIN McFEE

Hammercult

STEELCRUSHER

| SPV |

Israel's Wacken-conquering metallers race around the bases

Although billed as thrash, Israeli newcomers Hammercult cram so many black and death metal influences into their sound that it's simplest just to label them extreme. Formed in 2010 and winners of the Wacken Metal Battle the following year, the quintet have moved up fast. One listen to their populist potpourri of sounds and it's easy to see why. Like the cliché generator used to churn out both the band's moniker and the title of this, their second studio album, these guys specialise in spinning tried and tested tricks into a tapestry that's entertaining but ultimately insubstantial and rather too inoffensive for its own good. If the slickness and crowd-pleasing commerciality cranked out by the likes of Dimmu Borgir and Devildriver doesn't offend you, however, there's probably much to enjoy here. The blend of fury, melody and frantic pace no doubt makes for a good night out – the band are no slouches onstage – but attempting to cover so many bases and deliver something for everyone comes at a price.

6

GREG MOFFITT

De La Tierra prove to be not quite out of this world

DE LA TIERRA

DE LA TIERRA

| ROADRUNNER |

Andreas Kisser reaches out to the Latin tongue

Notably featuring the skills of Sepultura guitarist Andreas Kisser and a host of other Latin American talent, De La Tierra's debut album sees them proudly pushing their Spanish inflections front and centre. Their groove-laden stomp is embellished with flamenco flourishes, shuffling percussion and narrated almost entirely in the globe's second most prevalent tongue. And while on paper such a linguistic disconnect could serve to emotionally distance the English-speaker, the likes of Rammstein have comprehensively proved that you needn't be chatting in received pronunciation to get your point across. Indeed, De La Tierra's problems are far more pernicious than a mere language barrier. The lumpen bounce that characterises much of this album is as listless and lacking in charisma as you could imagine, Kisser and second guitarist Andreas Giminez running the well of treacle-y mid-paced riffing well and truly dry. Even when the choruses do come they are rarely made of the sterling sort of stuff they'd need to be to drag your pulse above a resting rate. There is some distance to run before this collaboration feels like anything more than a vanity project.

4

TOM DOYLE

READER REVIEW

CAN YOU OUTDO *METAL HAMMER*'S REVIEW CREW?

WOLVES LIKE US | *Black Soul Choir* |

PROSTHETIC |

The result of the band's collaboration with Mike Hartung at Propellor Studios is a rich, layered and melodic journey in post-hardcore-fuelled alternative rock. A handful of standout tracks such as *Three Poisons* and *When Will We Ever Sleep* are occasionally anthemic in vocal character, but always lush in Larsh Kristensen's well-executed and tasteful vocal harmonies. Heavily layered, atmospheric guitars smartly arranged over a solid, creative rhythm section give this sophisticated album depth, character and longevity. Powerful, dark and catchy.

***Stuart Norman* Woking**

9

Earth Crisis: not all experimentation is good

EARTH CRISIS

SALVATION OF INNOCENTS

| CANDLELIGHT |

NY metalcore originals expand the blueprint

Formed in 1989, Earth Crisis arguably pioneered metalcore and maintained a solid fanbase ever since. They've never been that adventurous in terms of songwriting but fast-paced lead single *The Morbid Glare* shows them moving out of their comfort zone with great success. Album opener *De-Desensitize* is less spectacular but *Out Of The Cages* offers catchiness and a breakdown to pick things up and *Devoted To Death* should stand the test of time live. *Shiver* is the most distinctive track on this anti-vivisection concept album but an example of where their experimental attitude doesn't quite nail it. Slow and growling with solid riffs but a dragging chorus, it's memorable but unrewarding. Still, there is a lot of groove and Ian Edwards' basslines are striking. Known for their straightedge vegan lifestyle, Earth Crisis have partnered with Black Mask Studio and their lyrics tie in with new comic book *Liberator*, which will feature artwork from Chicago-based illustrator Menton3. It's good to see these veterans taking a stand again.

6

NIK YOUNG

Last Album I Bought

ANDY SNEAP
Hell

{ JUDAS PRIEST
Screaming For Vengeance (Reissue)

"I bought it mainly for the footage from 1983, which is killer – they were really at their prime on that. The remaster of the album sounds really good as well, not squashed to death."

Hark

CRYSTALLINE

| SEASON OF MIST |

Sky-razing riffs from former Taint frontman

Born from the ashes of the dearly departed Taint, hard-hitting power trio Hark are the product of the ever-fertile mind of guitarist, vocalist and illustrator Jimbob Isaac. Aided and abetted by former Whyteleaf rhythm section Nikolai Ribnikov and Simon Bonwick, their debut record is a criminally good offering that's positively packed to bursting point with speaker-shaking, sludge-laden, giant-slaying riffs. Mixed by Converge's Kurt Ballou and featuring a suitably righteous guest performance from Neil Fallon on *Clear Light Of...*, Hark take us on a metal, blues and punk-informed cosmic trip over the course of 10 tracks. *Scarlet Extremities* is the undisputed album highlight and is the sonic equivalent of punching a hole in the moon, but there are plenty of stellar moments throughout including *Sins On Sleeves* which has some brief hints of Southern rock peeping out among the pile-driving riffs and *Hounded By Callus Decree*, which boasts numerous dizzying time signatures and ferocious leather-lunged vocals and overall, it's a thrilling new chapter in Jimbob's continuing musical tale.

8

EDWIN McFEE

I Am Heresy

THY WILL

| CENTURY MEDIA |

Boysetsfire mainman brings his hardcore values back to bear

If you discovered punk or hardcore a decade or so ago, the name Nathan Gray will be familiar to you as the voice of the hugely underrated Boysetsfire, whose mixture of politically motivated, singer/songwriter storytelling and furiously heavy punk was among the best the genre had to offer. I Am Heresy is his latest project and it's inspiring to hear his knack for melody, intelligent turns of phrase and throat-ripping, righteous indignation burns just as brightly as it ever did. The rest of his band are no slouches either. Heavier and resolutely more old school – most notably on the thrashing, solo-heavy *Destruction Anthems* – than BSF, I Am Heresy offer a glimpse of what you wish hardcore would represent in 2014. These are no bandwagon-hopping, cookie cutter, scene kids – this is a band committed to stripping the paint from your walls with white hot noise, although with Nathan in the mix you're never too far away from a brain-hugging chorus or memorable melodic vocal line.

8

He's still got it, now you should go get this.

STEPHEN HILL

Intervals

A VOICE WITHIN

| SELF-RELEASED |

Canada's proppy progsters touch on the sublime

We saw it before with Circles, and now previously instrumental outfit Intervals are taking their slice of the pop-flavoured prog metal pie with an album that introduces the vocals of ex-The Haarp Machine chappy Mike Semesky. If the thought of You Me At Six bred with Meshuggah has you wanting to retch, hold your lunch. *A Voice Within*, while dreadfully djenty in places, has more in common with Protest The Hero than any chugging riff machine or even ambidjent (yes, that is an actual thing) groovers like Scale The Summit. With unorthodox ideas like the lounge jazz of *Moment Marauder* or the post-rock guitar-play on *Atlas Hour*, not to mention Mike's soulful croon – a pleasant break from the growls that often accompany tech – there's enough here to encourage Intervals' entry into an already saturated market. The sublime twinkle of instrumental track *Breathe* reminds us that Mike is not *necessary* to exalt their music, he simply adds another dimension, yet the spinetingle brought on by *The Self Surrendered*'s huge choral singsong is a sure sign that magic can happen when you add a larynx to an instrumental hotbed.

7

HOLLY WRIGHT

Eths

EX UMBRA IN SOLEM

| SEASON OF MIST |

The French experimentalists' first release with singer Rachel Aspe features live tracks, rerecords plus one new track exhibiting a brutal revision of their gothic-tinged deathcore groove that signals promise in their new recruit. **[6]**

HOLLY WRIGHT

Extreme O.D.

CONTAMINATE

| SELF-RELEASED |

With three solid tracks, fervent fretwork, interesting song structures and harsh vocals courtesy of Katie Cairns, the new EP from this Stoke-On-Trent based metallic five-piece shows them worthy to watch. **[7]**

NIK YOUNG

Junius

DAYS OF THE FALLEN SUN EP

| PROSTHETIC |

Swathes of pain-drenched sonics consume like a tsunami on this audacious EP that rivals the emotive drive of Katatonia with the paradoxically bleak uplift of Isis, crafted to heartwrenching proportions. **[8]**

HOLLY WRIGHT

Issues

ISSUES
| RISE |

US pop metallers dare you to cry them a river

This lot will split opinion like nobody's business. Your ability to get onboard with Issues will depend almost entirely on how you feel about Tyler Carter's r'n'b-influenced singing style, which owes more to Justin Timberlake and Rihanna than it does Judas Priest or Ringworm. He is backed by a band who have clearly grown up on nu metal, with fizzing turntable scratches and wheeling synth loops bedding in alongside yoyoing riffs and second singer Michael Bohn's hardcore roar. The overall effect is startling and, at times, a little disorientating. Tracks like *The Settlement* turn on a sixpence at headspinning pace from guts-out anger to the sort of hook that Chris Brown would kill for. At its best their eclectic approach to pop metal yields some fine results, but you fancy there is a way to go before they hone their formula into something with real coherence. If your iPod has as many chart acts on it as it does full-blooded metal bands, this could be for you. Purists – run to the hills.

7

TOM DOYLE

Kayser

READ YOUR ENEMY
| LISTENABLE |

Multi-hued Swedish thrash crew spice up their act

If you love old-school Euro-thrash, *Bring Out The Clown* is going get you moshing. It's one of the best, thrashingly mad tracks of recent years, yet it's also just one strand of what makes these Swedes so stunning. Led by one-time Spiritual Beggars vocalist Spice, Kayser are capable of complementing a powerful metal presence with the richness of guitar harmonies and the sort of tunefulness that would make even Boston gasp with admiration. This is obvious on the stoner-fuelled gallop of *Bark And Bow*, or the anthemic crack of *I'll Deny You*. On their fourth album, Kayser have a magical poise that maintains a manic thrust while allowing space for guitarists Swaney and Jokke to lock in with a lush groove. It happens on *Dream Bend Clockwise*, again on the title track and on *Roll The Dice*, while *Almost Home* offers complexity without ever sacrificing its basic instincts. There are connections to the Beggars, but the chemistry here is very much about the five guys involved, and not about past musical paths. *Read Your Enemy* barnstorms, but it's accessible too.

8

MALCOLM DOME

Nashville Pussy

UP THE DOSAGE
| SPV/STEAMHAMMER |

Bawdy Southern rockers aim for pole position

Unashamed party animals, Nashville Pussy haven't sounded this strong since debut album *Let Them Eat Pussy* in 1998. Atlanta's fiery four-piece clearly don't give a damn, they're just doing what comes naturally – and that means pulling together references from Motörhead, Ted Nugent, Aerosmith and Skynyrd, alongside a huge dose of redneck attitude, while never losing their ribald sense of humour. It's obvious on *Everybody's Fault But Mine*, which owes something to Mountain, and carries on through the Motörhead-fuelled *Rub It To Death* and *Spent*. They then hook up the trailer to the ZZ Top snout for *Beginning Of The End* before getting countrified for *Hooray For Cocaine, Hooray For Tennessee*. This is Skynyrd with tongues in cheek, while *Pillbilly Blues* hitches a ride to an AC/DC groove circa *Let There Be Rock*, and *Pussy's Not A Dirty Word* could belong in the Aerosmith box. Yep, this is loud American rock'n'roll, with no frills, no regrets.

7

MALCOLM DOME

Nervosa

VICTIM OF YOURSELF
| NAPALM |

They are thrashers, hear them roar

The dispersion of extreme music throughout virtually every cultural strata on the planet has rendered the proliferation of female-fronted outfits refreshingly ordinary, so when an all-female act like Brazil's Nervosa come along, it is thankfully their music and not their gender that provides the more interesting discussion. Tapping into the nihilistic velocity of Bay Area thrash circa '86, this São Paolo-based three-piece have faithfully worshipped at the altars of Hanneman and Cavalera and their debut album offers a riotous celebration of those halcyon days of boozing, fighting and shredding. Polished musicianship is here in spades, with the real treat being drummer Pitchu Ferraz, who blows through every track with the inhuman fury of an eight-armed polyrhythmic tornado. That said, not a lot of new ground is being cracked here and while cuts like *Justice Be Done* and *Death* deliver truly scorching beatdowns, it is difficult to escape the sense that in reverentially channelling the spirit of their influences, they've erred too far on the side of playing it safe.

6

JOE DALY

Gus G: star power

GUS G

I AM THE FIRE
| CENTURY MEDIA |

Greece's mega-shredder gets down with his mates

It's usually with a sigh and the raise of an eyebrow that musicians announce a solo album. There are exceptions – Steven Wilson, Ihsahn, er... George Michael – but when it comes to shredders there's normally no justifying the self-indulgent twaddle they flog in the interest of creative freedom. Capitalising on his success with Ozzy and Firewind, this timely solo effort from Gus G thankfully does not see the six-string whizz kid indulging in noodling at the expense of a solid album. Boasting more guests than you can shake a whammy bar at, including Candlemass crooner Mats Levén, Billy Sheehan, Dave Ellefson and Michael Starr, Gus interweaves with a blend of classic rock-styled taut precision and fluid melody. Some songs lack pulling power, like the Jeff Scott Soto-led *Summer Days*, which meanders like a limp Bon Jovi cover but there are gems, most noticeably the pop-rock-inspired title track featuring Blake Allison from Devour The Day and the two instrumental songs: a friendly nod to Racer X in *Vengeance* and the Malmsteen-era *Terrified*. Michael Starr's straight-faced turn on *Redemption* is a particularly neat addition, seeing the Steel Panther funny man in a serious role for a change. Not a five-star record but definitely an all-star cast.

7

HOLLY WRIGHT

PEER REVIEW

WHAT ARE OUR HEROES SAYING ABOUT EACH OTHER?

IKTPQ | *Beloved* | EPITAPH |

"I Killed The Prom Queen have returned with an album that is so infectiously fun it should come with a health warning! It has *everything* a Prom Queen fan wants; from the huge, soaring, catchy choruses to the outright ridiculous break-downs, so heavy they make your head rattle. The pace of the album is blistering but that only makes the record that much more enjoyable. Metalcore done right to the letter and for me the best example of this is on the track *Calvert Street*. It feels almost nostalgic without being tired – it's heavy and melodically flawless. This album is a welcome return to real metal-core!"

DAVYD WINTER-BATES
Bury Tomorrow

Tuomas Holopainen concocts a power mallard

TUOMAS HOLOPAINEN

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SCROOGE

| NUCLEAR BLAST |

Nightwish mastermind unleashes a solo epic

Nothing about this album will surprise Nightwish fans; after all, Tuomas has been talking about making it for more than a decade. Inspired by Don Rosa's comic compendium *The Life And Times Of Scrooge McDuck*, this prog-a-thon is packed with orchestral sections, rambunctious choirs and Celtic overtones that'll have 'Wishettes squealing with delight. It's not symphonic metal but it has the Holopainen hallmark stamped all over it. With guest performances from Sonata Arctica's Tony Kakko and Nightwish piper Troy Donockley, *...Scrooge* is ambitious, with its meandering styles and occasional poppy moments, but it's also far more than just a frivolous interlude between Nightwish albums. Particular mentions go to the folkish *Into The West* and atmospheric *The Last Sled*, both of which could happily sit back-to-back with some of the Finnish band's mellower material. This is a brave and bold work from an extremely talented musician whose creativity apparently knows no bounds.

8

NATASHA SCHARF

The Pretty Reckless

GOING TO HELL

| COOKING VINYL |

Taylor Momsen offers the ladies' guide to Hades

Never backward in coming forward, former child star and teen pin-up, Taylor Momsen and her band (if you can name one of them without using Google then you're in a minority of one) has returned with a second album that pretty much sets out to ape the moderate success of their first. Angst-ridden, occasionally forlorn, sometimes punchy and aloof, you can almost see Taylor's mascara tears running down her perfect cheek as she gives the finger to former lovers/the man/the ladder in her stockings. Teenage boys aside, it's hard to see who Taylor's targeting as her audience. The album starts with the sounds of sex in a car and ends with the brittle, acoustic ballad, *Waiting For A Friend*. It's hardly the empowering call to arms one might have liked to imagine. She gives good ire though, brash and determined in the taut title track and the faintly ridiculous *Why'd You Bring A Shotgun To The Party*, and she can sound suitably abashed in a song like *House On A Hill*, but, collectively, it's unremarkable and never over soon enough.

6

PHILIP WILDING

Riotgod

DRIVEN RISE

| METALVILLE |

Classic rock revivalism from Monster Magnet side-project

When musicians step out from under the umbrella of their main band to initiate fresh collaborations, their efforts are often greeted with undue suspicion. Consider Pearl Jam's Stone Gossard's Brad, or Steve Harris's British Lion: fine bands doomed to be overshadowed and undervalued because of their lofty connections. Such concerns are unlikely to trouble Riotgod, a low-key vehicle for Monster Magnet guitarist Garrett Sweeny and drummer Bob Pantella, but it'd be a shame if this New Jersey quartet's excellent third album was overlooked. Riotgod occupy a sonic space somewhere between Torche, Soundgarden and, perhaps inevitably, Monster Magnet, but their secret weapon is fabulously named frontman Mark Sunshine, a vocalist of rare ability, versatility and power. From *Positronic*'s punkish snap to the Eastern psychedelia of *Prime Moment* and on to the sweetly harmonic acoustic ballad *You're My Waste Of Time, Driven Rise* is a wonderfully self-effacing and charming record, and a labour of love for all concerned. Alter Bridge fans, this could be your new favourite band.

8

PAUL BRANNIGAN

Sonata Arctica

PARIAH'S CHILD

| NUCLEAR BLAST |

Symphonic Finns turn the power back on

Fans of melodic power metal are an unforgiving bunch. Haters went into meltdown as Sonata Arctica began experimenting with a more hard rock-based direction, and some still won't take them seriously again until the return of Jani Liimatainen, the co-founding guitarist whose exit in 2007 was enforced by military service. Despite such inconsistencies they've continued to make fascinating music. Sonata had promised to return to a traditional melodic metal sound with this, their eighth studio album. Its contents are certainly cheesy enough but the problem lies with the mid-paced tempos and sheer wholesomeness of material such as *Wolves Die Young, Running Lights* and *What Did You Do In The War, Dad?* Still, there's some great musicianship and for all the criticism levelled against him in the past, Tony Kakko seems to have learned how to sell a song. An almost 10-minute operatic workout, *Larger Than Life* is also deliciously bonkers, though ultimately Sonata Arctica's dominant, sometimes shrill use of keyboards will probably horrify most casual metalheads.

7

DAVE LING

LTNT

DAO EP

| DUST DEVIL SOUNDS |

The debut five-track release from this London trio sets off on a slightly wayward musical path between grunge, alt. rock and blues. But if lacks cohesion, there is still enough bubbling talent here to suggest that's only a temporary condition. **[6]**

MALCOLM DOME

Shrine

CLOSER TO THE SUN EP

| MOUNTAINS OF RECORDS |

Three tracks of spasmodic, elastic and intricate prog from Brighton that peak with sky-reaching screams and plunge on the minor chord. Primus meets The Ocean in a short, sharp shock of a record. **[7]**

HOLLY WRIGHT

Zoax

XIII

| SIEGE OF AMIDA |

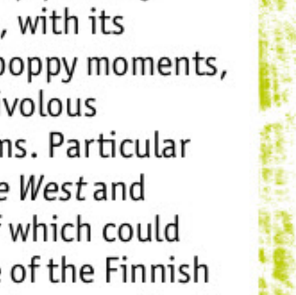
This London quintet's debut five-track EP is a welcome arrival for anyone who's seen them on the live circuit, with their trademark post-hardcore intensity on opener *Bitter.Anger.Fake*, soaring melodic peaks on *High* and spring-loaded riffs on *Mind Game*. **[6]**

ADAM REES

My Favourite Album Artwork

SCOTT IAN
Anthrax

IRON MAIDEN
Killers



"For me it has to be *Killers*! I actually bought Maiden's debut based on the art. I saw Eddie on the cover and knew it was going to be great, but the band musically and art-wise leapt forward by light years with *Killers*!"

The Unguided

FRAGILE IMMORTALITY

| NAPALM |

More of the same from the ex-Sonic Syndicate members.

Much to the joy of their army of fans, when Sonic Syndicate members Richard and Roger Sjunnesson and Roland Johansson released debut album *Hell Frost* under the new guise of The Unguided back in 2011, their former band was writ large throughout a record that seemed to pick up where the early era of the band had left off. With a few EPs under their belt since, this new full-length is very much a case of more of the same. The Swedes' polished modern melodic death metal unsurprisingly does little to mess with the formula and will no doubt tick all of the boxes for current fans of the band. It's the nature of what's on offer from this formula where the album falls down, however. While performed well enough, it's all too familiar, with one track of dual vocals, uninspired riffs and sometimes overpowering synth work easily melding into the next until in the end you can't help that you've heard it all many times before.

5

JASON HICKS

The Valiant

EMPRESS

| SELF-RELEASED |

Southampton's metalcore newcomers boost the formula

One of the hardest tasks for any band arriving late to a scene is to forge their own unique identity – not easy in a genre as regimented as metalcore. One option is to forget about originality, stick to the well-worn formula and just write better songs than anyone else. South coast newbies The Valiant may not have much that you won't have heard in their sound but, much like Bury Tomorrow, they have distilled the ideology of this music down to its purest form to create 100% proof metallic hardcore. This means that the riffs are brutally heavy yet sublimely catchy, the vocals switch from glass-gargling roars to pop-savvy, soaring melody in the blink of an eye and everything feels more than just another collection of beatdowns and growling. In the same way that it did when you first heard Killswitch Engage, this feels like an album of songs rather than moments. *Empress* is nothing new, but it's executed in fine style.

7

STEPHEN HILL

Wilson

FULL BLAST FUCKERY

| SELF-RELEASED |

Eclectic rockers bring their rampage to the UK

Originally unleashed in the US halfway through last year, Wilson's unstoppable debut finally gets a release on these shores and will doubtless have a similar impact. Like the bastard offspring of a four-way orgy between The Damned Things, Black Spiders, Cancer Bats and Every Time I Die, *Full Blast Fuckery* is stacked with Friday night rager anthems that will make you want to swing from the rafters, spitting whisky and broken teeth and screaming at the heavens. Every single track on here is an iron-clad crusher, with so many different references popping up that it becomes increasingly difficult to work out how they managed to make all these apparently disparate pieces fit so seamlessly. Kvelertak, Clutch, even a cheeky, vintage Maiden solo popping up in *Snake Eyes*... it's all here, and it's deliriously all over the place. The common factor? Shameless, good time rock'n'roll. Grab it on iTunes, crack open a few and keep your fingers crossed that these tracks get a live airing over here soon. This is a band that needs to be heard and seen.

8

MERLIN ALDERSLADE

Woland

HYPERION

| INDIE RECORDINGS |

Helsinki's Nietzschean visionaries prove not so super

Having previously released only the double A-side *Conquer All & Live Forever* for the Finnish Metal Expo in 2011, *Hyperion* marks Helsinki-based, post-black metal (their term, not ours) quartet Woland's first full-length foray, and a rather grandiose attempt to "gaze into the future with a Nietzschean vision and welcome it with open arms". If that means harvesting the most salient elements of about 47 different metal subgenres, and implanting them into a vaguely black metal framework, to create something far more familiar-sounding than you'd fear, then they've fucking nailed it. That's not to say, however, that *Hyperion* isn't without its moments, but where the likes of *Art Of Ascension* is draped in the same threatening stomp as latter-era Dimmu Borgir, and closer *Elevated Existence* shows the same masterful combination of musical pomp and blistering riffage as mid-period Ihsahn, too often their more adventurous moments miss their targets wildly. Flamenco guitars and pianos in metal are all well and good, yet disappointingly here – the latter especially during *Live Forever* – they feel like an afterthought at best. All too predictable.

6

TOBY COOK

Savage Messiah go for glory. In 3, 2, 1...

SAVAGE MESSIAH

THE FATEFUL DARK

| EARACHE |

Potent third LP from London thrash crew

Earache's decision to make Savage Messiah's 2011 album, *Plague Of Conscience*, available for free undoubtedly boosted the thrash quartet; some 50,000-plus downloads later, the band now have a platform to establish themselves in the upper echelons of the UK metal scene. Their challenge now is to convert the curious into the committed. Happily, *The Fateful Dark* steps up boldly, retaining the core elements that made its predecessor an underground favourite – crunching Testament-esque riffing, deftly executed dual harmony leads in the Tipton/Downing tradition and bullish gang choruses – while adding a new-found sense of sophistication and melodic nous to the songwriting. As with A7X's *Hail To The King*, *The Fateful Dark* tilts unself-consciously towards the giants of our world. *Zero Hour* could fit seamlessly onto Megadeth's *Rust In Peace*, *Hellblazer* comes on like a fast and frantic rewrite of Priest's *Exciter* and the galloping *Cross Of Babylon*, exclusively previewed on the *Hammer* website in December, nods towards prime-time Maiden – while retaining a freshness, individuality and bite all its own. It's both a grand leap forward for the band and an impressive marker for their aspirant British metal peers in 2014.

8

PAUL BRANNIGAN

REVIEWED NEXT MONTH...

Within Temptation

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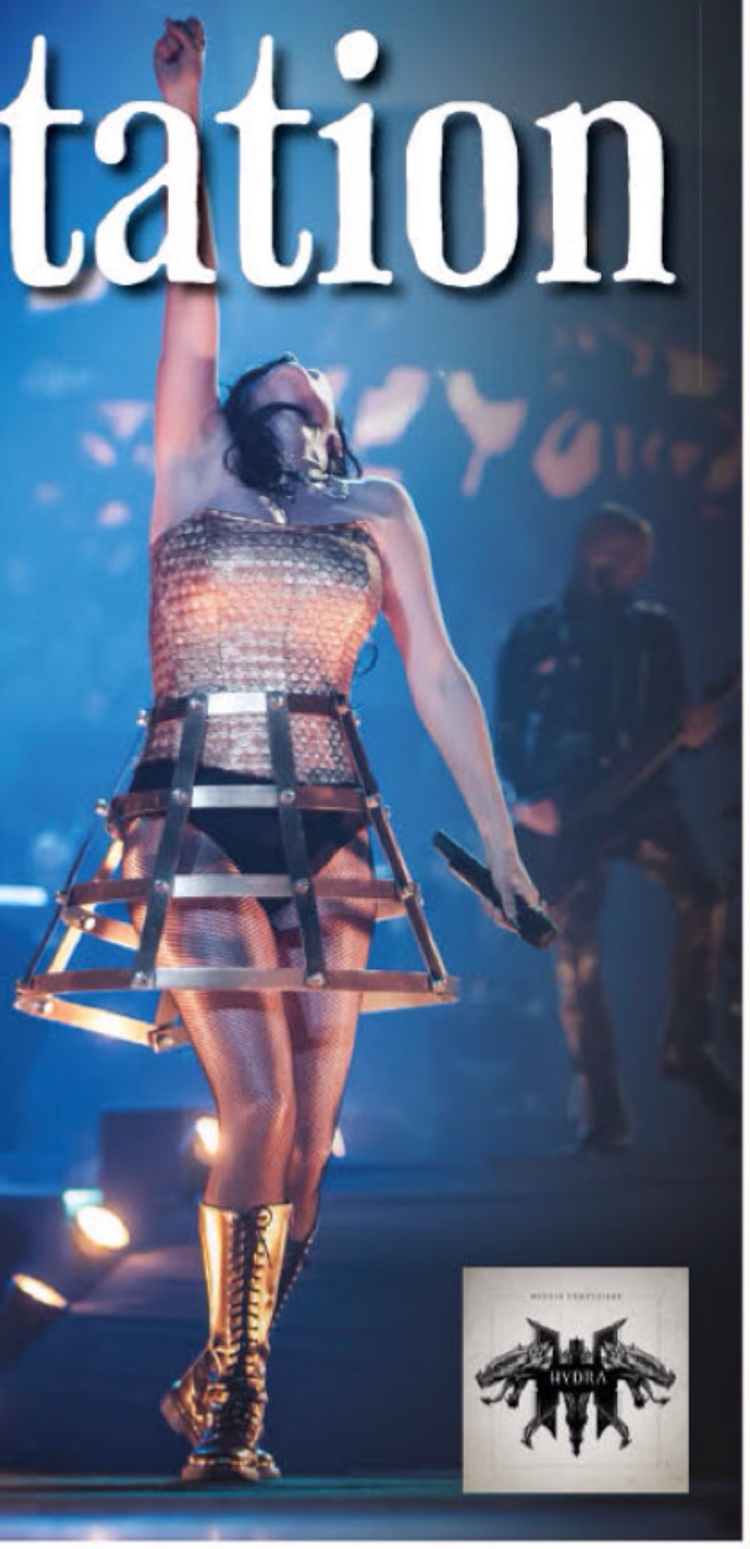

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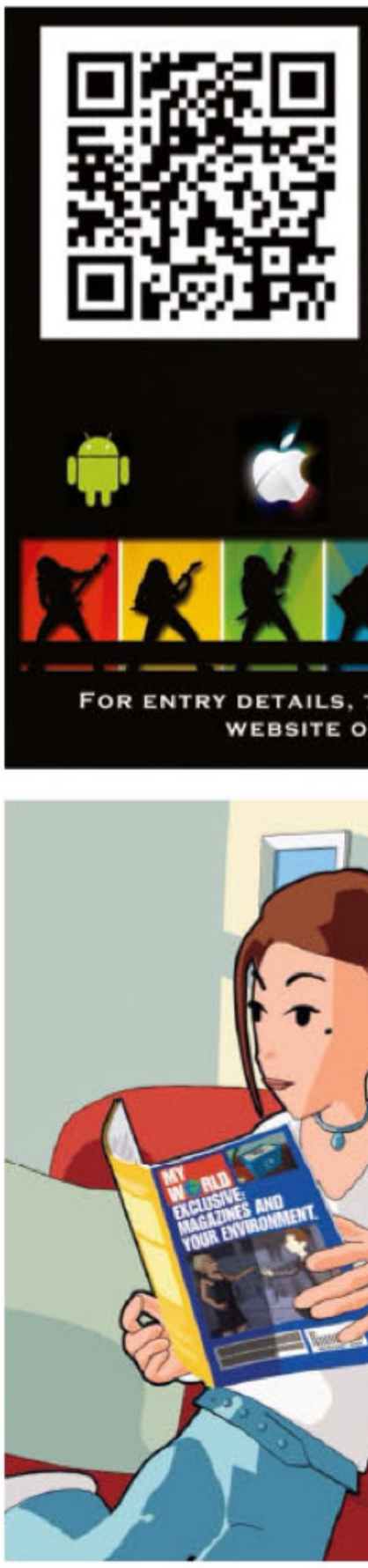

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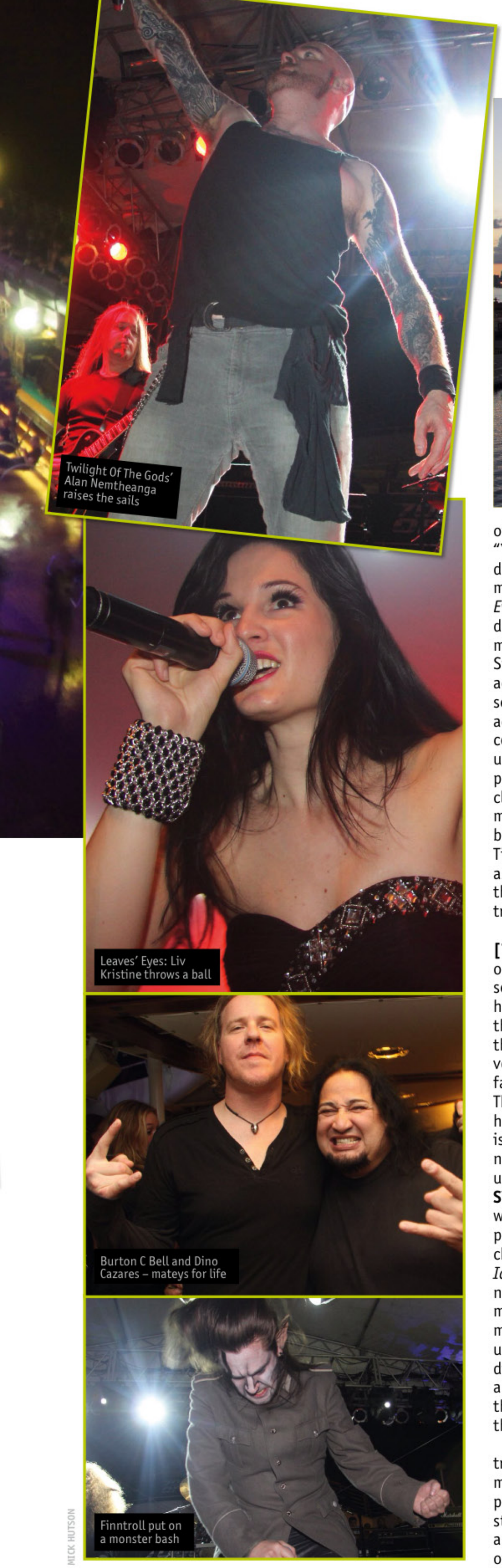
MONDAY

The bearded man striding towards the ship's metal detector looks about as far from sound as they get. Grinning wickedly and buffed out in a full-on chainmail shirt, he has lashed a giant ram's horn to his belt and, for reasons known only to him, the outfit is topped off with a bright red Santa Claus cap.

A burly security guard eyeballs him sharply and asks, "Have you got anything in your pockets, sir?" Before the confused lad has a chance to reply, the guard chuckles and waves him straight through to a legion of several hundred chattering folks in metal t-shirts queued before the immense liner, the *Majesty Of The Seas*.

From this point forward, the outside world is but a faint memory. Today we board 70,000 Tons Of Metal – a four-day festival on a luxury cruise ship that will transport 2,000 metalheads from more than 60 countries, not to mention 40 bands (that's nearly 500 people including their crews), as well as 800 crew members, from Miami to Mexico and back. Along the way, passengers will be treated to *80* gloriously ear-punishing sets (each band plays twice), spread across three onboard venues, including the top deck of the ship, which has been fitted with a full stage abutted by swimming pools, hot tubs and deck chairs. Oh, and the crown jewel: a small army of vendors happily patrolling the vessel at all hours of the day with rolling chests of ice-cold bottles of beer. We have arrived in the Elysian Fields of metal.

At 5:30pm, the ship pulls away from the dock and the three-man wrecking crew known as **SWASHBUCKLE [7]** kick it all off in the Spectrum Lounge with a thrashy onslaught



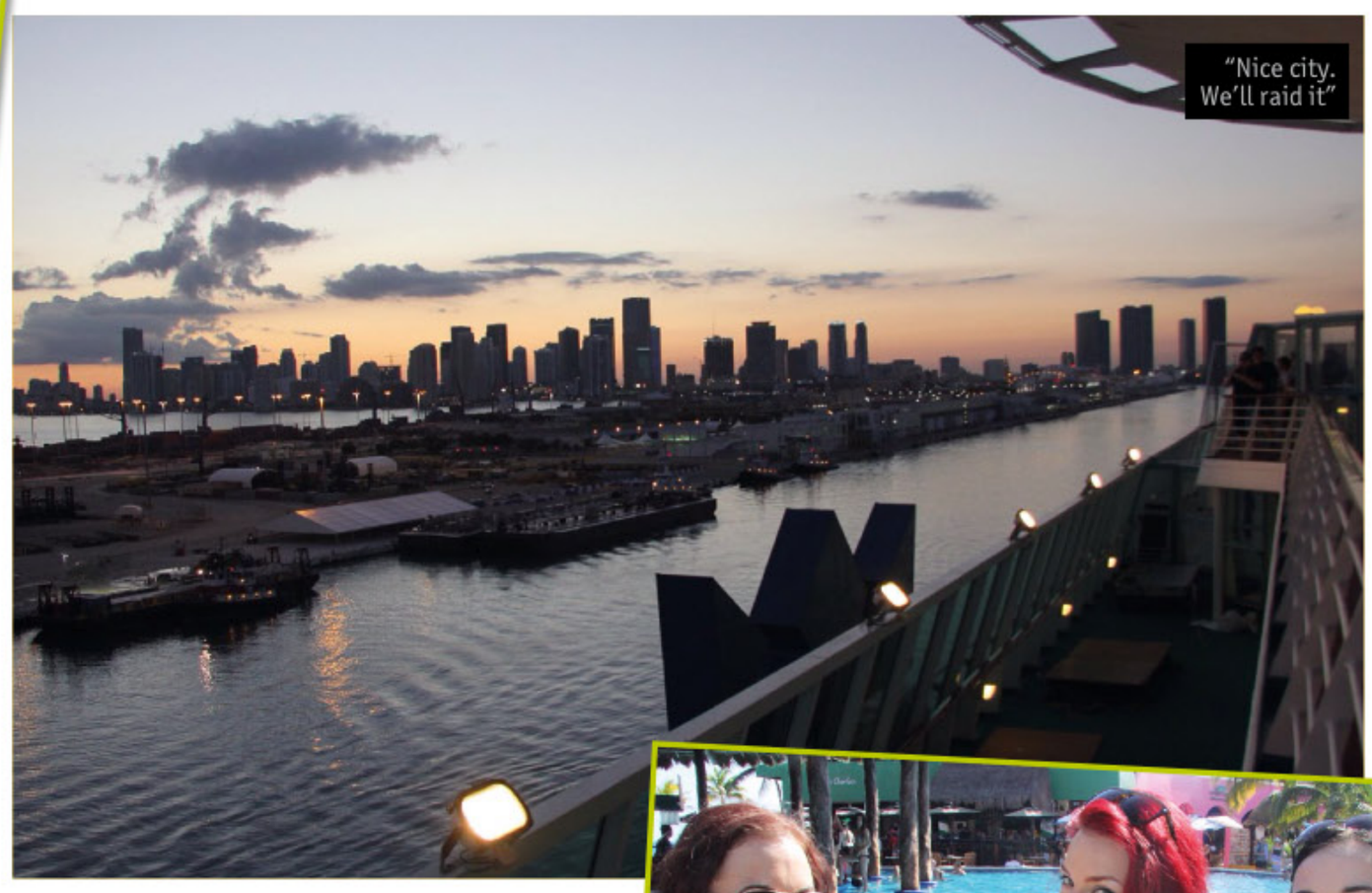
Twilight Of The Gods' Alan Nemtheanga raises the sails

Leaves' Eyes: Liv Kristine throws a ball

Burton C Bell and Dino Cazares – mateys for life

Finntroll put on a monster bash

MICK HUTSON



"Nice city. We'll raid it"

"Oooh the fuck arrr you?"

of breakneck grooving and plenty of "Yo ho" choruses. Much to the crowd's delight, they play five songs in under five minutes, including *I Hate The Sea And Everything In It*. Fitting their melodic death chassis with more modern, metalcore-inspired enhancements, Sweden's **SOILWORK [8]** sound polished, aggressive and utterly magnificent, setting an impressively high bar for the acts to follow later this evening. Though celebrating three decades together, an unfocused catalogue of albums has prevented Germany's **ATROCITY [7]** from claiming a higher foothold among the death metal giants, but tonight they launch into a blitz of brutish hooks glistening with Tipton-style fretwork and the punters are absolutely having it. A last-minute addition, they survive the set without their bassist, his tracks digitally added.

A random t-shirt survey reveals **OVERKILL [7]** to be a ship favourite, but unfortunately, opening-night equipment issues push their set back nearly an hour and when they finally take the stage, the vocals are mixed far too low. Thankfully however, the mix is rectified for the next act. "What's up, motherfuckers?" bellows golden-throated **SYMPHONY X [8]** frontman Russell Allen, who leads his band through a blinding polyrhythmic vortex, jam-packed with the chest-beating stomp of anthems like *Iconoclast*. Electric currents of energy are now coursing through the house and never mind that midnight is well in the rear-view mirror, because **OBITUARY [9]** are next, uncorking a barrage of bone-powdering dirges from their landmark *Cause Of Death* album. Their set squarely establishes that the ship itself is *not* the heaviest thing on this cruise.

Best known for their deft fusion of traditional Finnish folk and extreme metal (not to mention their pointy prosthetic ears), **FINNTROLL [8]** storm onto the pool deck stage and rip into a blistering campaign of jagged fretwork and mountain-cracking blastbeats that incite the top deck into a frenzy and the main floor into an absolute wall of death. At the tail-end of the set, we jog back down to the Chorus Line theatre to catch **VICIOUS RUMORS [7]** running through a brawny parade of power grooves, revisiting their *Digital Detractor* album in its entirety. Before shutting it down for the night, we steal back up to the top deck where **TWILIGHT OF THE GODS [7]**, fronted by Primordial vocalist Alan Averill, tap into the powerful riffage and thunderous rhythmic bluster of their debut, *Fire On The Mountain*, closing with a convulsive cover of Bathory's *Blood Fire Death*. Sated, spent and already amped up for tomorrow, on the way back to our cabin we pass a **SHATTERED GERMAN GUY [2]** singing *Gangnam Style* in the heavy metal karaoke lounge. OK then.

We have arrived in the Elysian Fields of metal

TUESDAY

It's another glorious day of beautiful azure skies and skin-peeling ultraviolet rays weathering our delicate European skin. We polish off a massive breakfast with a soul-crushing siege of doomy death metal from Finland's **SWALLOW THE SUN [8]**, whose inert stage presence only amplifies the plodding heft of their sound. **LEAVES' EYES [6]**, who are Atrocity fronted by vocalist Liv Kristine, follow with a decent but unremarkable

FACT Costa Maya is home to numerous, if lesser Mayan ruins. The port was badly damaged by Hurricane Dean, which hit Category 5 in August 2007.

THE GOSPEL LIVE

The Haunted's Marco Aro faces down a mutiny

What was in that Piña Colada

Carcass's Jeff Walker charts a course of destruction

set of symphonic goth metal that seems to fade into background noise for the tatted-up sunbathers grabbing their first beers of the day. Er, morning.

Downstairs, Greece's **SEPTIC FLESH [8]** are tearing shit apart with battering hymns of symphonic death, underpinned by gorgeous melodic hooks on favourites like *Unbeliever*. They earn more than a few new fans over the course of their gig.

For Swedish metallers **THE HAUNTED [9]**, today marks an historic day; this is the band's first show since the return of founding members vocalist Marco Aro and drummer Adrian Erlandsson, along with new guitarist Ola Englund, and the combination erupts with muscular rhythmic aggression and seismic hooks, mixing classic cuts with selections from their new EP, inciting howls of horn-throwing approval from the crowd. "I wouldn't have believed this in a million years," Marco says, unable to contain his grin. "This is the greatest day of my life."

With a distinctive approach that pairs swirling prog metal grooves with serpentine Middle-Eastern melodies, Israel's **ORPHANED LAND [7]** incite a towering response through the first few songs but some down-tempo numbers and scattershot pacing ultimately leave the modest crowd a bit flat-footed. Upstairs in the smaller Spectrum Lounge, we discover where everybody else is – they're all raging, moshing and roaring through the **DEATH ANGEL [8]** set, where the Bay Area pioneers offer a primer on old-school speed metal, drawing from both their superb debut, *The Ultra-Violence*, including *Mistress Of Pain*, as well as material from last year's *The Dream Calls For Blood*.

Carcass's battle plan: destroy everything and take no prisoners

Tapping into the progressive complexity of their early releases, **DARK TRANQUILLITY [8]** issue a sprawling death metal beatdown, with *The Fatalist* emerging as an unqualified highlight in a flawless set of gems. While immigration issues have waylaid **SATYRICON**'s **[7]** drummer Frost, Soilwork timekeeper Dirk Verbeuren steps in and powers the band through oldies like *Repined Bastard Nation*, every beat resonating with unfiltered malice although falling a bit short of the schizophrenic menace of Dark Tranquillity.

Meanwhile, industrial pioneers **FEAR FACTORY [9]** arrive to play their 1995 classic, pulverising *Demanufacture* album in its entirety, rattling with plenty of jackhammer tempos, precision fretwork and charismatic singer Burton C Bell's inimitable vocal charge. Fresh off a North American tour, they fire on all cylinders, leaving the ecstatic crowd baying for more as the set reaches the finish.

"Hope you guys aren't too fucking lazy to come down here," shouts **CARCASS [9]** frontman Jeff Walker to the Fear Factory crowd ambling into the Chorus Line theatre. Within the first 60 seconds, Carcass reveal a clear and unequivocal battle plan for the set – destroy everything and take no prisoners. Fresh off the success of 2013's *Surgical Steel* and plenty of touring, the set sizzles with scorching fretboard interplay on slabs like *This Mortal Coil* and *Unfit For Human Consumption*.

Although we avoid German karaoke stars on the way back to the cabin tonight, we do stop to admire a South American lad blowing through *Bark At The Moon* on a classical violin.

WEDNESDAY

The ship pulls into the tiny resort town of Costa Maya – which appears to have recovered quite nicely from the hurricane that hit in 2007 – where the weather is 27° and sunny, with the spongy humidity high enough to justify, nay, to *compel* the consumption of prodigious quantities of

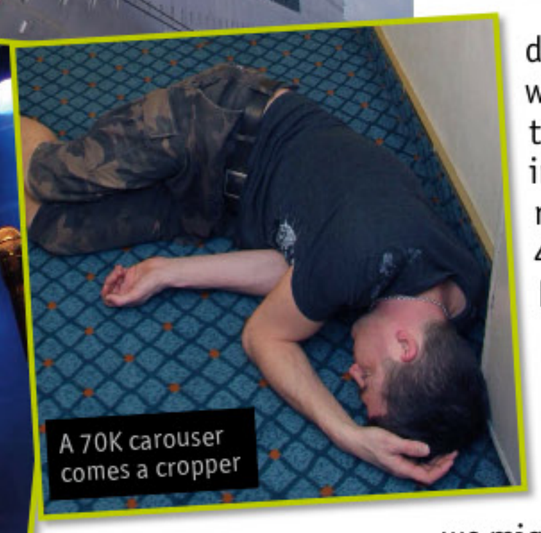
Los Hombres des Metales

FACT Carcass frontman Jeff Walker designed the cover for fellow grindcore heroes Napalm Death's debut album, *Scum*, which was released in 1987.

SS Majesty Of The Seas sets sail for Tortuga

Paddle metal!!!

Overkill: NY's kings of thrash make a splash


A 70K carouser comes a cropper

cold beverages. Retreating into a cool cantina overlooking the tiny town, we find the Death Angel lads fending off dehydration with a table full of beer bottles and shot glasses. Top form, all around.

Back on the ship, Denmark's **HATESPHERE [7]**, now entering their third decade of feverish speed metal worship, are flaying the crowd with a merciless headbanging maelstrom. The set offers a tasty warm-up for **UNEARTH [8]**, whose feverish campaign of technically precise metalcore brutality raises the nagging question of: why aren't these guys a million times bigger? Upstairs, **BONFIRE [5]** run through a pair of mid-tempo AOR-friendly numbers, followed by a hokey ballad that inspires an exodus downstairs to the **HAGGARD [6]** show. With their operatic flutter and dramatic posturings, Haggard offer something truly unique in the lineup, although the theatrical aspects ultimately dilute the potency of the material.

MASSACRE [7] meanwhile, are flogging their crowd with an old-school death metal pasting, spiked with fiery torrents of thrash, hitting the punters like a giant shot of sonic adrenaline. "Cheers, you pirates!" crows **CRIPPER [7]** vocalist Britta Görtz before slugging back a bottle of ale and kicking her band into *Dogbite*, part of a late-night thrash showcase with plenty of hawkish fretwork, although admittedly a little thin in the hook department.

THURSDAY

We awake to torrential rains battering the hull of our peerless vessel, but unlike most land-based music festivals, here we're not spending the rest of the day slogging through muddy lagoons or standing in windy Portaloo lines. Instead, the rain simply requires us to step into one of the ship's cosy pubs, where Raven's John Gallagher is giving a bass clinic. By lunchtime, festival organisers have moved all outdoor shows into the two indoor venues.

After procuring a cup of coffee the size of a house cat, we tuck into the propulsive kvltish snarl of **KEEP OF KALESSIN [8]**, who approach their set as if they were headlining Wacken. They are seven shades of awesome. Upstairs, with their wee mascot, John Goblikon, directing the crowd, **NEKROGOBLIKON [6]** run through an energetic and thoroughly over-the-top gaggle of party thrash, and while admittedly entertaining at the outset, the joke is reduced to gossamer by the halfway point.

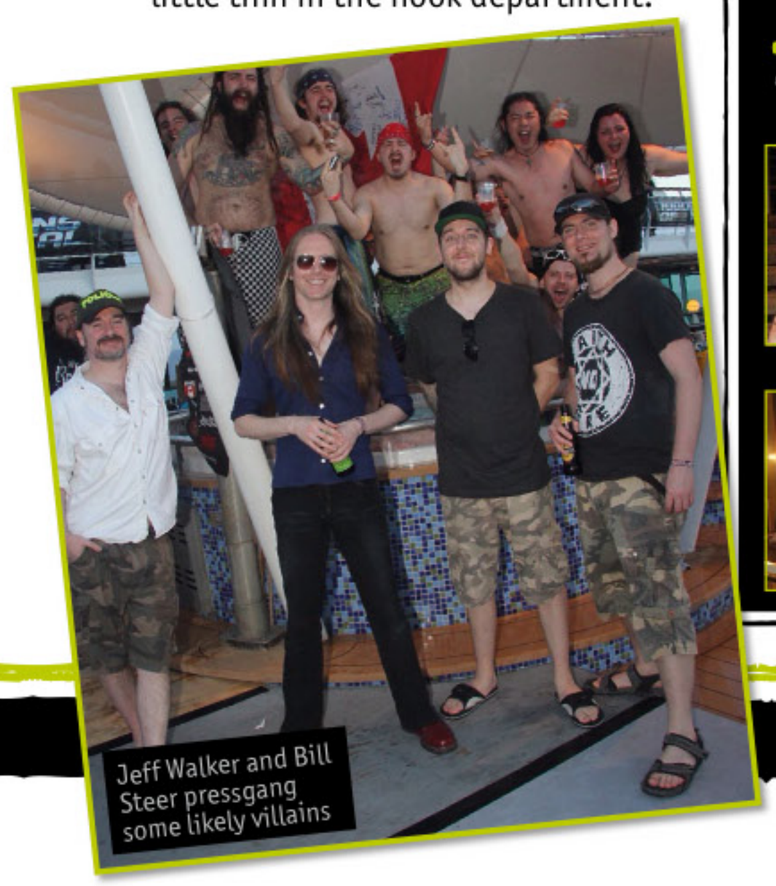
For many of us, 4pm spells the part of the day where we begin wrapping up our shift and thinking about dinner, but not on 70KTOM, where 4pm sees **DEATH TO ALL [9]** demolishing the Chorus Line theatre with a brilliant and devastating foray through the roots of death metal, including *Zombie Ritual* and a stunning rendering of *Spiritual Healing*. Of the 40 bands in the festival lineup, none have cast a longer shadow than Death, and deceased founder Chuck Schuldiner is remembered with a pictorial tribute that induces free-flowing tears among many of the faithful.

Because of the rain, it looks like we might not get the big finale the organisers have planned, but spirits are far from dim when the NWOBHM heroes **RAVEN [6]** unleash a dazzling flurry of pentatonic wizardry, although the sense that they are perhaps trying too hard proves a bit distracting, as if the goal of each song is to slap each other on the back and say "Hooray for heavy metal!"

For many aboard this intrepid ship, old-school crossover outfit **D.R.I. [8]** are the main draw and the grizzled veterans demonstrate precisely why with a scintillating blend of hardcore, metal and punk, running through a career-spanning clutch of fan favourites on a tiny stage with ample room for moshing. Bucket-list stuff for many of these people.

As the final minutes of the cruise tick away, Austrian splatter kings **THE CHURCH OF PUNGENT STENCH [8]** are blowing the windows out with acres of crippling grindcore riffage paired with full-blown Zeppelin solos. From the easy interplay between the musicians, it would be easy to forget that this band have only recently ended a six-year hiatus. We can't think of a better way to end this epic festival, although word is already out that next year's cruise will be the biggest one yet, with a new ship fitting an ice rink, a thousand more fans and a jaw-dropping 60 bands. See you at the front of the line, mateys.

JOE DALY


Jeff Walker and Bill Steer pressgang some likely villains

HOW WAS IT FOR YOU?

70K'S SEAFARERS REVEAL THEIR CRUISE HIGHLIGHTS

KEN STEEVES
NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA
"The people. The first time I came here four years ago, I didn't know anyone. Now I've got friends all over the world."

DENISE LICHTERFELD
FRANKFURT, GERMANY
"My highlight has definitely been D.R.I. It was one hell of a show and my complete highlight."

SHEILA LOFTUS
ONTARIO, NEW YORK USA
"Seeing Obituary. Plus seeing the tribute that Death did really touched my heart."

CHAD LEWIS
DETROIT, MI
"Just hanging with everybody again. I've been on every cruise, including the Barge To Hell, and I'll be back."

Chuck Billy and Phil Anselmo: two of metal's finest frontmen

Mike Portnoy: drum master

METAL MASTERS 5

HOUSE OF BLUES, ANAHEIM

The crowd are a sweaty tangle of hair, horns and triumphant smiles

Metal's shred elite reconvene on the West Coast

Metal's first big blowout of 2014 has arrived: Metal Masters 5, the annual shredding showcase where the list of performers reads like an induction roster for the Heavy Metal Hall Of Fame: Kerry King and Gary Holt from Slayer, Anthrax's Frank Bello, Charlie Benante and Scott Ian, Megadeth's David Ellefson and Chris Broderick, Mike Portnoy, Pantera's Phil Anselmo and Rex Brown, Testament's Chuck Billy, and Billy Sheehan. A howling 200-metre queue of denim and leather establishes the feverish anticipation for the gig.

First up is Bello and Ellefson's new side-project, Altitudes And Attitudes. Joined by Broderick and Portnoy, they dive straight into a brawny set that taps into the vocal harmonies of Maiden riding atop the galloping rhythmic heft of modern metal. Ian Scott and event founder Mark Menghi then offer a custom Schecter guitar to whoever can play the main riff to *Caught In A Mosh*. Amazingly, the first kid who tries *nails* it and becomes one of five lucky bastards to go home with an elite new axe.

Sheehan joins Portnoy and Broderick for Dream Theater's *A Change Of Seasons Part 1*, until Steve Vai saunters onto the stage and, with Sheehan, launches into a blizzard of shredding that sees more notes played in 60 seconds than some bands will play all month.

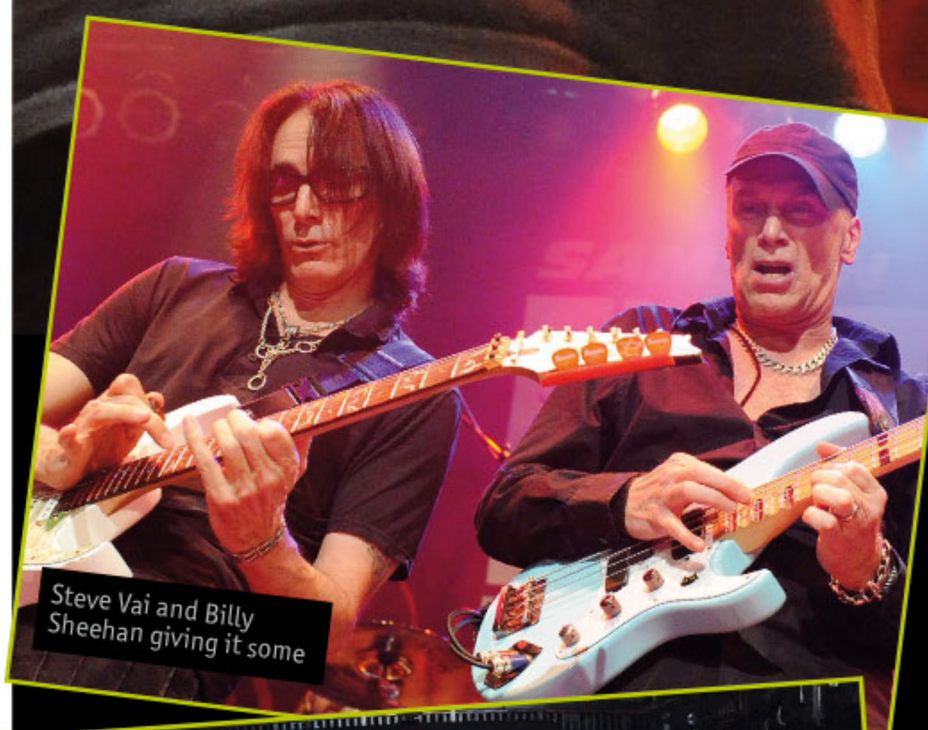
Chuck Billy appears next and with both Portnoy *and* Benante on drums, Ellefson on bass and Broderick and Ian on guitars, they tear into *Wrathchild*, kicking off a nearly two-hour set that includes anthems by Kiss, S.O.D. and Sheehan's NY rockers Talas.

Roof-blowing applause greets Phil Anselmo, who, along with Rex Brown, Kerry King and Gary Holt on guitar, plunder the Slayer and Pantera catalogues. Anselmo acquits himself impressively on the Slayer tracks, exploring a vocal range rarely tested in his other projects.

Ending with *Fucking Hostile*, the crowd are now a sweaty tangle of hair, horns and triumphant smiles. Menghi's satisfaction is palpable. "I could get anybody for Metal Masters," he tells *Hammer*, "but I pick people who are passionate about inspiring kids to play music. That's why I do this." By the looks on the faces in the crowd, mission accomplished.

JOE DALY

10


Steve Vai and Billy Sheehan giving it some

Masters of Metal (young and not-so-young) assemble

FACT The first Metal Masters Clinic featured Megadeth and Anthrax bassists Dave Ellefson and Frank Bello teaching techniques to a crowd in Manhattan.

Gama Bomb

SSS

Underworld, London

Tonight a double bill showcasing two very different strands of the UK thrash metal underground spectrum combine to deliver a beer-soaked, whiplash-inducing knees-up.

First up, **SSS [8]** pummel those in attendance with their crossover-inspired racket. They barely pause for breath in between songs, unless frontman Foxy has a moment to vent his spleen at the audience, driving though their thoroughly barbed and spiky blasts. It's a no-bullshit noise that you wouldn't want to follow and, in truth, **GAMA BOMB [7]** struggle to match their intensity. This is wonderfully dumb party thrash, no doubt, but it lacks the necessary danger that their support band provided. Philly Byrne is a great frontman, amusing and engaging, but hardly a great vocalist and his repetitive yelps give Gama Bomb's songs a monosyllabic quality. In all fairness, if they do only have one song it's a decent one and the thrashers down the front lap up every second of what's a solid and enjoyable set. It just never feels dangerous enough to spill over into the chaos and carnage you'd associate with the genre at its finest.

STEPHEN HILL

Enforcer

SKULL FIST/ VANDERBUYST

Underworld, London

Young Dutch rockers **VANDERBUYST [8]** are still yet to make a big impact in the UK. That's a shame, because their brand of high energy hard-rocking is a real joy, lying somewhere between old-school heavy metal and the sort of melodic hard rock peddled by Triumph in the late 70s. It's time people took note. **SKULL FIST [7]** are moving away from 80s-style speed metal towards a shredder's take on power metal, although it's when they slow down a little that they sound best. **ENFORCER [8]** are nothing if not ambitious, their stage set-up and presence designed to make you feel like you are watching a band aiming for the top. Rooted in 1982, these Swedes clearly love Maiden and Accept – it's all about classic metal riffing with massive hooks – and the likes of *Katana* and *On The Loose* get the sort of crowd involvement 80s metal demands. At times they let the adrenaline drive them to play a little too fast, but then the patch-jacketed throng lap the energy up like cats getting the metal cream.

ALASTAIR RIDDELL

Protest The Hero's Rody Walker: still stalking the Twilight Zone

Tesseract's James Monteith proves highly strung

"Awright mate – fancy meeting you here!"

Thy Art Is Murder: murdering it

PROTEST THE HERO

TESSERACT/THE SAFETY FIRE/INTERVALS

ELECTRIC BALLROOM, LONDON

Progressive metallers fail to progress

Tonight's Anglo/Canadian tech face-off begins with **INTERVALS' [7]** sumptuous melodies and breeze-block grooves being hampered by a near-empty venue and some frustratingly low vocal levels. The sound isn't perfect for **THE SAFETY FIRE [8]** either, but tracks from the slow-burning *Mouth Of Swords* album sound destined to fire them tantalisingly close to the prog big leagues. **TESSERACT [8]** are greeted as if they were headlining and play with the confidence to suggest they should be. The most serious band tonight, they concentrate on nothing but their music. It's all stunningly underpinned by Ashe O'Hara, filling that troublesome vocalist spot and showcasing an often breathtaking range. **PROTEST THE HERO [7]** struggle to match that. As impressive as they are, the impact of their emotive, dizzying noise has dulled as more bands have adopted a similar approach. It leaves these former trailblazers sounding like just 'another' band; but of course, with Rody Walker out front, they still have a strong USP. Those at the front go suitably nuts and a packed house for a band this bizarre is nothing to be sniffed at, but there's a feeling among many that PTH are treading water.

STEPHEN HILL

THY ART IS MURDER

HEART OF A COWARD/ AVERSIONS CROWN/ AEGAEON

CLWB IFOR BACH, CARDIFF

Oz deathcore crew return to batter the UK

Tonight's bill is testament to both the tribal adherence of deathcore fans and its potency in the live environment. The guttural **AEGAEON [6]** and **AVERSIONS CROWN [8]** are from the same mould as the headliners, with the requisite oppressive breakdowns and eerie lead breaks. However, it's the latter's uncompromising use of three eight-string guitars, literally shaking the whole room with each bass-heavy drop, that's most memorable. Sticking out on such a bill certainly helps **HEART OF A COWARD [9]**, who come armed with both the best riffs and a wave of confidence following the last year's excellent *Severance*. It's a level **THY ART IS MURDER [7]** initially fail to match, taking a few songs to hit their stride before the seething blastbeats of *Infinite Death* and pit-inducing *The Purest Strain Of Hate* whip the crowd into a frenzy. Noticeably darker than on record and with vocalist Chris McMahon doing his hellish best at the helm, the Aussies are determined to demonstrate why they've garnered such devotion. Ultimately the night's victory rests on who has the biggest tunes, not the most bludgeoning beatdowns.

ADAM REES

METAL MASTERS: STEPHANIE CABRAL/PROTEST THE HERO: JAMES SHARROCK/THY ART IS MURDER: ADAM GASSONV

Killswitch: on top form

Trivium's Matt Heafy regrets his choice of setlist

KILLSWITCH ENGAGE/TRIVIUM

MISS MAY I/BATTLECROSS

BRIXTON ACADEMY, LONDON

Jesse Leach brings the punk and pride to metalcore pioneers

Kicking things off in thunderous fashion, **BATTLECROSS [7]** may be a little meat'n'potatoes and no-frills in their approach but what they lack in tunes and overall originality, they certainly make up for with gusto and an enthusiasm for their craft. You may be fooled into thinking that **MISS MAY I [8]** are a little out of place on tonight's more traditionally heavy lineup, but after spending a portion of last year blitzing around America in cavernous hockey arenas with Five Finger Death Punch, the band have a hugely improved live show that sees them replacing the shrinking violets of yesteryear with a dominant, imposing showing of power and red-blooded fury. It could be a very big 2014 for them indeed.

TRIVIUM [6] are greeted like conquering heroes before they've hit a note but the band fail to live up to the lofty expectations we have of them. An odd setlist choice that includes 12-and-a-half-minute epic *Shogun* means that they struggle for momentum, and while their stage show is filled with CO2 blasts and snow – which all gets a little Aled Jones for our liking – it does little to distract from the fact that this is a fairly tepid showing from a band capable of mashing your tits off.

KILLSWITCH ENGAGE [9] are a different beast entirely. Armed with nothing but minimalist lighting and a metric shit-ton of enormous anthems, the band hit the ground running at 120mph and never let up for a single second. Quite simply, the return of Jesse Leach has done wonders for this band. Cut from the same cloth as Henry Rollins and Phil Anselmo, his commanding, stronger-than-all aura gives Killswitch an extra punk rock dimension in terms of attitude. His emergence as one of the very best frontmen in metal has also meant that there's far less distracting pratting around from Adam D, so the band's arsenal of awesome tunes are given the attention they deserve. Every single chorus tonight is sung from the diaphragm of more than 4,000 diehards with an awe-inspiring fervour. It just doesn't get much better than this.

TERRY BEZER

Trivium fail to live up to the lofty expectations we have of them

SETLIST

KILLSWITCH ENGAGE

A Bid Farewell
This Is Absolution
The New Awakening
The Arms Of Sorrow
This Fire Burns
Beyond The Flames
Rose Of Sharyn
Rise Inside
Always
My Last Serenade
Turning Point
Fixation On The Darkness
In Due Time
The End Of Heartache

ENCORE

My Curse

FACT Killswitch Engage's Jesse Leach has also toured with Trivium as the singer for his blues rock band, Seemless, although the band are currently on live hiatus.

Kylesa

SIERRA/JAGGED VISION

Islington Academy, London

As if signing them to their Retro Futurist imprint wasn't enough, Kylesa have given Norway's **JAGGED VISION [7]** and Canadian trio **SIERRA [6]** a further leg-up by dragging them out on tour with them. The blistering, ferocious energy of the former's hardcore-tainted stoner battery ultimately has far greater impact than the latter's overly showy, if not still infectious, stoner blues. It doesn't seem that long ago that **KYLESA [8]** were playing the room upstairs from tonight's venue and their performance again reminds us why their popularity continues to grow. Stage presence has never been their strongest attribute, and although it takes two songs for Laura Pleasants' and Phil Cope's guitars to be turned up enough as to not be stomped all over by their familiar dual-drum assault, by the time the likes of *Unspoken* and a crushing *Nature's Predators* roll around, the quintet are near their best. Aided also by a subtly disorientating light show as well as Phil's now lengthier theremin interludes, their show already seems honed for yet bigger venues.

TOBY COOK

Sepultura

PRIMITAI

Islington Academy, London

With their third full-length album, *Rise Again*, under their belts, British heavy metallers **PRIMITAI [7]** grace the Academy tonight with a ton of youthful energy – not to mention some seriously slick riffage. They're ambitious and engaging, but the crowd remain static throughout their set, no doubt impatient for the main event. As if in riposte to the wide notion that **SEPULTURA**'s **[8]** star is on the wane, tonight the packed Academy erupts just seconds after they take to the stage. Derrick Green is a captivating stage presence; even when he steps back to let Andreas Kisser sing *Da Lama Ao Caos*, it's hard to look away. The set mostly draws from their latest, *The Mediator Between Head And Hands Must Be The Heart*, a scathing, political record. Songs like *The Vatican* and *Age Of The Atheist* go down a storm, but it's the classics like *Inner Self*, *Refuse/Resist* and, of course, *Roots* that send the crowd into a frenzy. The pit stretches back almost all the way to the doors and *everyone* is moving. This is metal at its most visceral: the band are tight, their sound monstrous, their energy ferocious.

CATHERINE MORRIS

KILLSWITCH ENGAGE: WILL IRELAND/TARJA & ADTR: JAKE OWENS

Tarja Turunen proves her metal worth

Hitting the high notes in style

TARJA

ISLINGTON ACADEMY, LONDON

Gothic metal queen takes the middle road

Finnish metal soprano extraordinaire Tarja Turunen is gracing the Islington Academy with her presence tonight and by the looks of things, she couldn't be happier about it. From the second she appears onstage to the opening strains of *In For A Kill*, she never stops beaming at her adoring audience.

The epic orchestral intro has been absolutely done to death, but given Tarja's history it's only fitting. As a performer, she is pretty much a fan's dream – far from acting like the diva she was once labelled as, she's humbled by every round of applause she receives and even accepts a single red rose from someone on the front row. Most of tonight's set comes from *Colours In The Dark*, while also dipping into Tarja's previous two albums. The melodrama of the songs is heightened by *that* voice, for which it seems she barely even needs a microphone. Unfortunately, with the exception of the thrilling *Anteroom Of Death* and the experimental *Mystique Voyage*, the set never picks up from mid-pace, causing the second half to lull. When she takes to the stage again for the first of two encores, it's to perform the foreboding *Victim Of Ritual* and indulge fans with a 'cover' of Nightwish hit *Wish I Had An Angel*. She's going through the motions somewhat, but nobody seems to mind.

6

CATHERINE MORRIS

Burning down the house – literally

Jeremy McKinnon owns the night

A DAY TO REMEMBER

MALLORY KNOX/ EVERY TIME I DIE /THE STORY SO FAR

ALEXANDRA PALACE, LONDON

Floridian rockers storm the Palace

For the stalwart metalhead, tonight's mixed bill is a bit like a game of aural Russian Roulette. To be fair to **THE STORY SO FAR [6]**, though, there's a decent heft to their pop-punk even if they fail to raise their onstage energy levels to what one might expect. There are to be no such problems for **EVERY TIME I DIE [8]**, who grab the throng by the scruff of the ballsack and proceed to scream bloody murder in their faces. Their raucous rock'n'roll-tinged hardcore shakes the very foundations of the Palace, with *We'rewolf* less a song and more of an incitement to riot. Keith Buckley cements himself as one of the finest frontmen of his genre and watching him air-guitar his mic stand as the room descends into chaos is a moment of sheer joy. By comparison, pop-rockers **MALLORY KNOX [5]** feel about as charisma-free as possibly imaginable, and so it is left to **A DAY TO REMEMBER [7]** to bring home the bacon. Indeed, if rock music in the live arena is meant to be a spectacle, then ADTR are stone cold winners. Endless pyro, a singer in a zorb ball and enough confetti to drown a giraffe make this an eye-popping show, regardless of how you feel about the band's sing/scream cut'n'shut.

TOM DOYLE

Make no bones about it, this is the devil's music

Dani Filth reveals the perils of watching too much *TOWIE*

Nergal makes a claim for heavy metal immortality

BEHEMOTH

CRADLE OF FILTH/IN SOLITUDE/ INQUISITION/SVARTTJERN

FORUM, LONDON

A night of triumph for the Lord of Hades

Behemoth surpass even the loftiest expectations tonight

On a night when there is only ever going to be one true victor, Oslo black metal crew **SVARTTJERN [6]** make a decent, scabby-knuckled fist of plugging the venue into the hellish mains. Their sound may be generic and their stage presence awkward, but the noise thundering out is endearingly brusque and nasty. **INQUISITION [8]** fare better, the upwardly spiralling reputation the duo are enjoying combining with a startlingly potent and punchy sound to make their set fly by like a snarling caco-daemon hurtling through Hades' gates. Fortune's light is not shining quite so brightly on **IN SOLITUDE [7]**, despite their irrevocable coolness and gloriously perverse tampering with the occult rock blueprint. A thunderous and gripping *Lavender* aside, the Swedes' set is compromised by the Forum's wonky acoustics and finishes prematurely, but their uniqueness and charisma remain a thing of wonder and they will have bigger, better nights than this.

If playing second fiddle suggests **CRADLE OF FILTH [8]** have become part of the extreme metal furniture rather than the wicked pacemakers they once were, no one seems to have told them. Dani Filth and his ghoulish hired hands are on superb form tonight, powering through a shrewdly constructed set that climaxes with the always monumental *Her Ghost In The Fog* and a vicious *Funeral In Carpathia*. There's plenty of life in the filthy old dogs yet.

Never mind his escape from death's clutches, Nergal and **BEHEMOTH [10]** have been cruising towards incalculable triumph for years now and thanks, in part, to the brilliance of *The Satanist*, tonight is a simple exercise in conquering the throne and soaking up the adulation. Imperious, thrilling and magical throughout, the Poles have never looked more unstoppable, the likes of *Conquer All*, *Slaves Shall Serve* and *Ov Fire And The Void* thrumming with renewed vitality while those astonishing new songs already sound like classics. Closing with the pitch-black magnificence of *O Father O Satan O Sun!*, Behemoth leave the stage safe in the knowledge that their elevation to metal's upper echelons is little more than a formality. As Nergal loudly points out, it's fucking great to be alive. What a band. What a fucking show.

DOM LAWSON

SETLIST

Blow Your Trumpets Gabriel
Ora Pro Nobis Lucifer
Conquer All
Decade Of Therion
As Above So Below
Slaves Shall Serve
Christians To The Lions
Driven By The Five-Winged Star
The Satanist
Ov Fire And The Void
Alas, Lord Is Upon Me
Furor Divinus
At The Left Hand Ov God
Chant For Eschaton 2000
Father O Satan O Sun!

FACT Nergal was only 14 years old when he started Behemoth, originally calling himself Holocausto, but he'd been in garage rock bands even before then.

Long Distance Calling

JUNIUS/ WOLVES LIKE US

Barfly, London

Norway's **WOLVES LIKE US [7]** toil through a set marred by technical trouble but still deliver passion and gruff, punk-infused metal by the bucketload. **JUNIUS**'s **[9]** sprawling atmospheres have the room rapt from the off. Their gargantuan soundscapes – part Neurosis, part My Bloody Valentine, part introspective Deftones – envelop the Barfly with consummate ease.

LONG DISTANCE CALLING [8] have a tough act to follow. What is abundantly clear, though, is that the audience are utterly dedicated to the LDC cause. Each deft moment of rise and fall is met with horns, headbangs and whooping cheers. The band give back in kind with an expansive set of predominantly instrumental prog that repeatedly scoops the room into a delirious frenzy. While they may lack the jaw-dropping power of some of their most notable peers, this is a slick, consummately professional showing from an endlessly able outfit.

TOM DOYLE

Admiral Sir Cloudesley Shovell

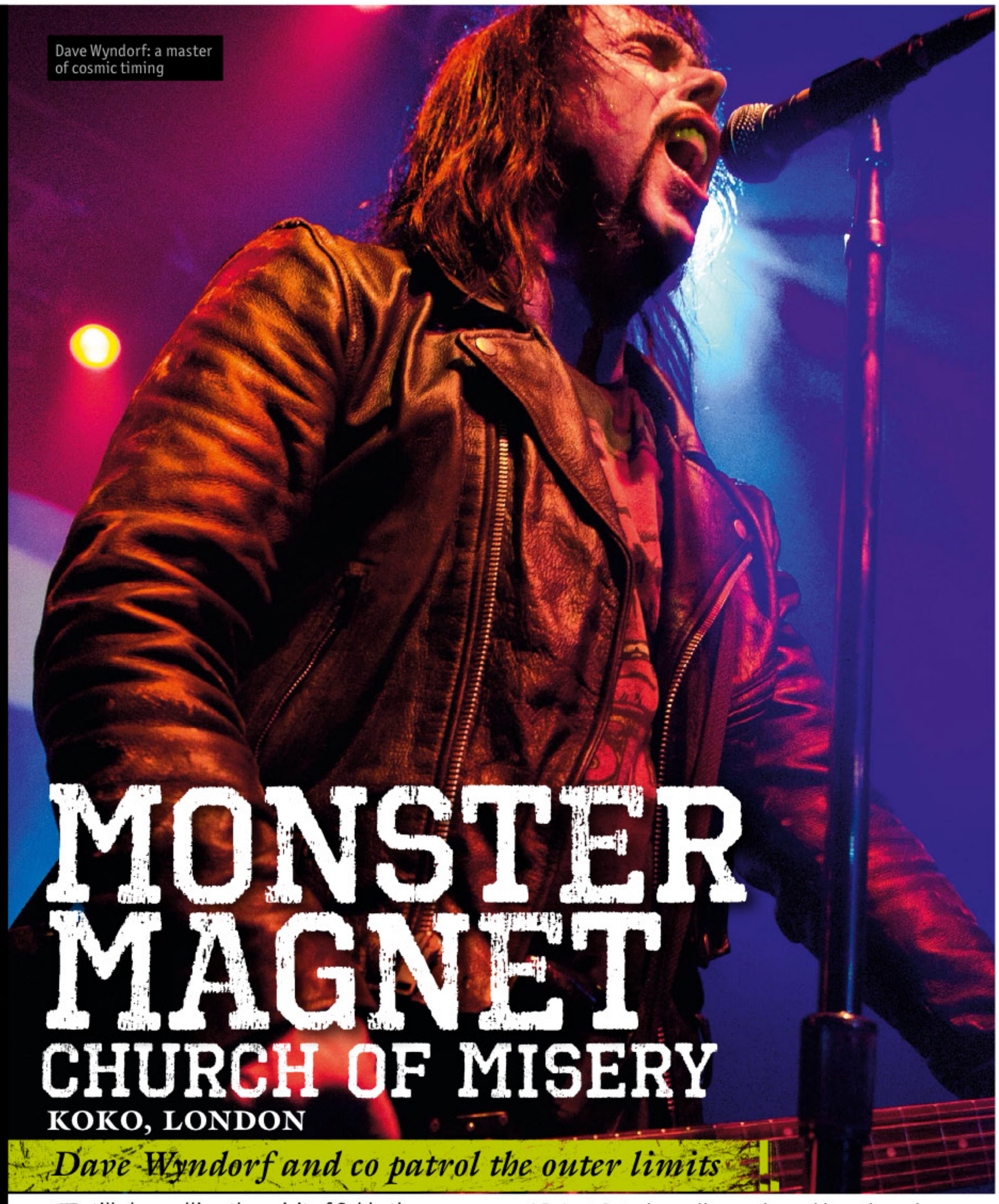
The Lexington, London

Admiral Sir Cloudesley Shovell's inclusion in a night of occult talk and worship isn't an outwardly obvious choice given the theme of this Ghoul's Night Out instalment but their sound is evocative of a time when heavy rock was gaining traction and their atmosphere is most certainly 70s-centric and more than fitting in that respect. Their retro psych rock is a delicious end to an evening that features comedy, magick and a host in the form of Andrew O'Neill channelling snarky snake gods and reeling out more witch-related puns that you can shake a broomstick at. Despite the event overrunning the trio are in good spirits. Their rock'n'roll actions are engaging and the band are on fine comedic form themselves tonight and deliver two new singles – *Black Sheep* and the rollicking *Elementary Man*. There's nary a head that isn't bobbing by the time they finish. Just don't make O'Neill's mistake and compare them to Spinal Tap, no matter how tongue in cheek it's meant!

7

CHERYL CARTER

BEHEMOTH: ESTER SEGARRA/MONSTER MAGNET: TINA KORHONEN



Dave Wyndorf: a master of cosmic timing

MONSTER MAGNET

CHURCH OF MISERY

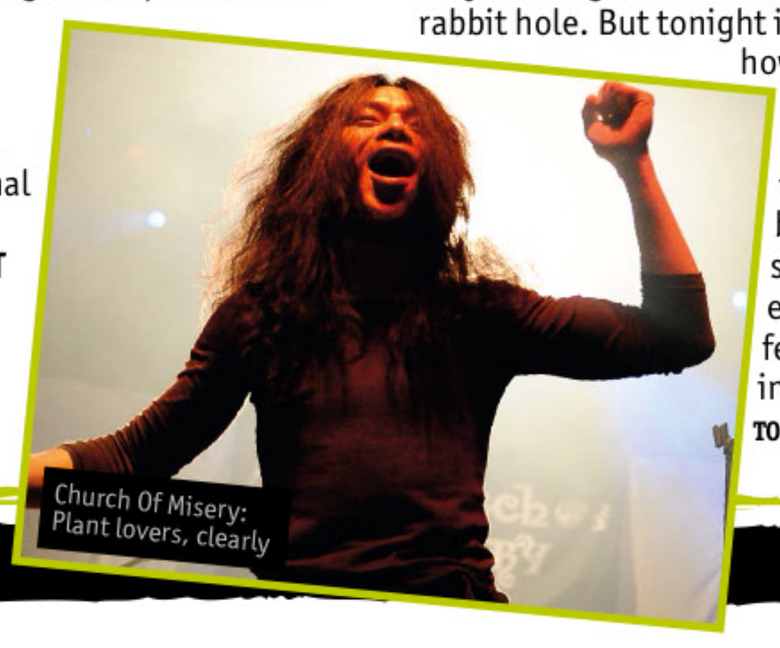
KOKO, LONDON

Dave Wyndorf and co patrol the outer limits

Still channelling the spirit of Sabbath as unashamedly as always, in their live incarnation **CHURCH OF MISERY**'s **[8]** gradual transformation in to Led Zeppelin's Satanic doppelgangers continues unabated – from their demonic rockstar posturing to the way that vocalist Hideki Fukasawa spasms and contorts like a possessed Robert Plant marionette. That is, when he's not crouched in front of his vintage Moog, piercing the acrid fog of doom with the sort of noises that pigs make when you force them to smoke. With the addition of guitarist Ikuma Kawabe for last year's brutally groovy *Thy Kingdom Scum* adding a richer yet still threatening tone to the band's sound, tonight it's still the homicidally propulsive *Born To Raise Hell* that retches the front rows from mere head-nodding worship to full-on, rabid frenzy.

Having previously rolled through town to play both their genre-defining debut, *Spine Of God*, and the seminal *Dopes To Infinity* in their entirety, **MONSTER MAGNET [9]** are no strangers to the 'one-album-in-full' show – yet to do it with their don't-call-it-a-comeback LP, *Last Patrol*, an album released less than six months ago, might seem like a gamble. As it turns out, it isn't. With *Last Patrol* delving back to the vintage, psych-heavy space rock that made them, and with the ubiquitous oil-lamp projections and Vietnam war footage towering behind them, Dave Wyndorf's troupe nonetheless totally avoid slipping into self-parody, instead displaying a total mastery of their universe – at once both regimented in groove and discombobulating in their expansive, third-eye-blurring meanders. And, with band and audience somehow locked into the same cosmic headspace the relative calm of the likes of their interpretation of Donovan's *Three Kingfishers* and the acoustic-lead *The Duke (Of Supernature)* succeed not in skewing the night's lysergic flow, but instead only sending the entire audience further down the rabbit hole. But tonight is not all about *Last Patrol*, however, and despite the prevalence of their space rock past and present throughout, it's still the brash, biker-rock of set-closer *Space Lord* that elicits the evening's most fervid cheers. Space lords indeed, motherfuckers.

TOBY COOK



Church Of Misery: Plant lovers, clearly

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LIVE EVIL

• MARCH 3 •

2014 2014

SYLOSIS

HITTING THE ROAD WITH DEVILDRIVER AND BLEED FROM WITHIN IN APRIL.

You guys were involved in a van crash in the US. What actually happened?
Josh Middleton, guitar/vocals:
"We were travelling to Montreal from Toronto in an RV/motor home. I think the vehicle in front of us went to change lane then swerved back into our lane; our driver didn't have time to brake or to swerve to avoid it, so we ended up going into the back of them. We were all so lucky to avoid any major injuries or broken bones."

It must have been a bummer to leave that tour with Trivium and Devildriver.
"Yeah, we were just over two weeks into the tour, not even halfway, and it was going so well. We've built up a good fanbase in the US so it really sucked to drop off the tour."

You do seem to be getting some decent love from the US. What do you put that down to?
"A few things. Chris Adler putting us on tour with Lamb Of God over there last year helped make an impact. The heavy music scene over there is overpopulated with all the trendy bands and when it comes to straight-up metal akin to bands like LOG, there aren't a huge amount of bands doing it. There's a ton of scene bands, deathcore, death metal, breakdown bands. I guess we're a bit unique in our music."

You're back on the road with Devildriver and BFW soon. Excited?
"Definitely. We played a few small UK shows leading up to Christmas, so we have played, but it'll be cool to really get stuck into touring again."

How well do you know the other bands on this bill?,
"We know Devildriver enough to know they're good dudes. We've known Bleed From Within for years now, and have toured with them, or just hung out with them whenever our paths have crossed, numerous times. It's always a relief before a tour to know that everyone on it is cool."

AMARANTHE
APR 5 LONDON O2 ISLINGTON ACADEMY
APR 9 WOLVERHAMPTON SLADE ROOMS
APR 11 NOTTINGHAM RESCUE ROOMS

ARCHITECTS
MAR 7 MANCHESTER ACADEMY 2
MAR 8 GLASGOW O2 ABC
MAR 9 SHEFFIELD LEADMILL
MAR 11 CARDIFF SOLUS
MAR 12 BIRMINGHAM INSTITUTE
MAR 14 LONDON KOKO

ASKING ALEXANDRIA
OCT 22 NORWICH UEA
OCT 23 NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY
OCT 24 NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY
OCT 26 EDINBURGH PICTURE HOUSE
OCT 27 GLASGOW BARROWLAND
OCT 28 BELFAST ULSTER HALL
OCT 29 DUBLIN OLYMPIA
OCT 31 MANCHESTER ACADEMY
NOV 1 LEEDS O2 ACADEMY
NOV 2 CARDIFF GREAT HALL
NOV 4 BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY
NOV 5 SOUTHAMPTON O2 GUILDHALL
NOV 6 LONDON ROUNDHOUSE
NOV 7 BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY
NOV 9 BRIGHTON DOME

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MAY 10 LONDON VARIOUS VENUES

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AUG 7-10 CATTON HALL

BURY TOMORROW
MAY 21 STOKE SUGARMILL
MAY 22 EDINBURGH STUDIO 24
MAY 23 LIVERPOOL ACADEMY 2
MAY 28 OXFORD ACADEMY 2
MAY 29 CARDIFF SOLUS 2
MAY 30 PLYMOUTH WHITE RABBIT
MAY 31 KINGSTON PEEL

CHELSEA GRIN
THE BROWNING
MORE THAN A THOUSAND
SILENT SCREAMS
MAR 15 MANCHESTER SOUND CONTROL
MAR 16 CARDIFF CLWB IFOR BACH
MAR 17 GLASGOW CATHOUSE
MAR 18 WOLVERHAMPTON CIVIC HALL
MAR 19 SOUTHAMPTON JOINERS
MAR 20 LONDON UNDERWORLD

CLUTCH
APR 22 NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY
APR 23 LEEDS METROPOLITAN
APR 24 MANCHESTER ACADEMY
APR 29 BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY
APR 30 BRIGHTON CONCORDE 2
MAY 1 LONDON FORUM
MAY 3 BRISTOL TEMPLES FESTIVAL
MAY 6 EDINBURGH LIQUID ROOM
MAY 7 GLASGOW ABC
MAY 8 BELFAST LIMELIGHT
MAY 9 DUBLIN ACADEMY

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DESERTFEST
BORIS, KVLERTAK, SPIRIT CARAVAN, BLUES PILLS, CHURCH OF MISERY, ELDER, KONGH, ASG + MORE
APRIL 5-7 LONDON VARIOUS CAMDEN VENUES

DEVILDRIVER
SYLOSIS
BLEED FROM WITHIN
APR 3 CARDIFF SOLUS
APR 4 LONDON ELECTRIC BALLROOM
APR 5 WOLVERHAMPTON WULFRUN HALL
APR 6 GLASGOW GARAGE
APR 8 DUBLIN ACADEMY
APR 9 MANCHESTER ACADEMY 2
APR 10 SOUTHAMPTON MO CLUB

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JUNE 13-15 CASTLE DONINGTON

FIVE FINGER DEATH PUNCH
UPON A BURNING BODY
MAR 28 BIRMINGHAM ACADEMY
MAR 30 LONDON FORUM
APR 1 MANCHESTER ACADEMY
APR 3 GLASGOW ACADEMY

FUNERAL FOR A FRIEND
BOYSETSFIRE
APR 25 LONDON O2 ISLINGTON ACADEMY
APR 26 LEEDS COCKPIT
APR 27 CARDIFF UNI SOLUS 2

GRAND MAGUS
MAR 12 MANCHESTER NQ LIVE
MAR 13 DUBLIN THE PINT
MAR 15 WOLVERHAMPTON SLADE ROOMS
MAR 16 LONDON UNDERWORLD

HALESTORM
APR 1 NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY
APR 3 SHEFFIELD O2 ACADEMY
APR 4 MANCHESTER ACADEMY
APR 5 BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY
APR 7 BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY
APR 8 BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY
APR 9 LONDON FORUM

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HAMMERFEST VI
KREATOR, OVERKILL, SOILWORK, CORROSION OF

LIVE EVIL

CONFORMITY, GRAND MAGUS, UNLEASHED, EARTHTONE 9, BLACK MOTH + MORE

MARCH 13-16 HAVEN HAFAN Y MOR HOLIDAY PARK

HEAVEN'S BASEMENT GLAMOUR OF THE KILL THE DIRTY YOUTH

MAR 13 NORWICH WATERFRONT
MAR 14 NOTTINGHAM RESCUE ROOMS
MAR 15 SOUTHAMPTON TAKEDOWN
MAR 16 LEEDS COCKPIT
MAR 18 NEWCASTLE UNI SU
MAR 19 GLASGOW CATHOUSE
MAR 20 BELFAST VOODOO
MAR 21 DUBLIN VOODOO LOUNGE
MAR 22 MANCHESTER ACADEMY 2
MAR 24 CHESTER THE FORUM
MAR 25 BRISTOL THE FLEECE
MAR 27 LONDON ELECTRIC BALLROOM
MAR 28 PLYMOUTH WHITE RABBIT
MAR 29 BIRMINGHAM ACADEMY 2
MAR 30 BRIGHTON THE HAUNT

RED FANG

OREGON'S RIFF KINGS BACK IN THE UK – WITH AN UPGRADED LONDON SHOW!

You recently played Istanbul. How was that?
Aaron Beam, vocals/bass:
"It was amazing! We had a show scheduled in Istanbul for the beginning of our last European tour, but it was just a week past the start of all the protests, where people were getting shot and stuff like that, so the show was cancelled. This was a make-up show, and they said it's the biggest club in Istanbul. I was pretty blown away, and the fans were pretty rabid. They were tearing me apart! Originally I was thinking that I'd crowdsurf, but maybe it was too dangerous..."

There are a lot of territories around the globe getting more attention for their metal scenes now...
"Yeah, it's great. We actually played a festival in Milan in Italy over the summer, and there was this band from Botswana there. They're a thrash metal band, and they were playing their first show outside of the country. It was pretty interesting!"

Your London show has been upgraded! That's cool!
"Yeah, it's fantastic. It's great news for us, obviously, but it's pretty exciting that there are three cities in the world that I feel are the entertainment capitals of the world – New York, Los Angeles and London – and every single show in London has been a highlight show for us. Every show there has been sold out, which is exciting. You feel a bit more pressure to play in a city like that, and not only have all the shows been great, but we've played well in all of them."

You guys are doing very well in an era dominated by tattooed-up pretty boys.
"So far, that's the way it's worked out, which has been remarkable. It means that we are still pretty flabbergasted every time we come over, and it was enough that there were three people who knew who we were when we first came over the first time. The fact that it keeps growing... Our sense of awe is not diminishing at all."

Why do you think you're such a hit on these shores?
"I can't explain why a bunch of fat, ugly 40-year-olds are appealing to enough people to come to a show. Maybe it's because we seem more like them? Ha ha ha! Because it took us so long to get to this point, we don't have any illusions of being 'rock stars' or whatever. And we know that it could easily end in a matter of moments."

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APRIL 27 MANCHESTER RITZ

KATATONIA

MAY 16 LONDON UNION CHAPEL
MAY 17 LEEDS BRUDENELL SOCIAL

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LORDS OF THE RIFF SCORPION CHILD MONSTER TRUCK

MAR 16 BRISTOL EXCHANGE
MAR 18 COLCHESTER ARTS CENTRE
MAR 20 BIRMINGHAM ACADEMY 3
MAR 21 SHEFFIELD CORPORATION
MAR 22 GLASGOW KING TUTS
MAR 23 NEWCASTLE ACADEMY 2
MAR 25 NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY
MAR 26 LONDON UNDERWORLD
MAR 27 MANCHESTER ROADHOUSE

NINE INCH NAILS COLD CAVE

MAY 18 BIRMINGHAM LG ARENA
MAY 20 GLASGOW HYDRO
MAY 21 CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA
MAY 23 LONDON O2 ARENA
MAY 24 NOTTINGHAM CAPITAL FM ARENA
MAY 25 MANCHESTER PHONES 4U ARENA

OF MICE & MEN ISSUES BEARTOOTH

APR 16 SOUTHAMPTON MO CLUB
APR 18 LONDON KOKO
APR 19 MANCHESTER RITZ
APR 20 GLASGOW O2 ABC
APR 22 BIRMINGHAM INSTITUTE
APR 23 CARDIFF GREAT HALL

OVERKILL

MAR 13 LONDON O2 ISLINGTON ACADEMY
MAR 15 DUBLIN ACADEMY
MAR 16 GLASGOW CATHOUSE
MAR 17 MANCHESTER SOUND CONTROL

PEARL JAM

JUL 8 LEEDS ARENA
JUL 11 MILTON KEYNES BOWL

RED FANG THE SHRINE LORD DYING

MAR 17 SHEFFIELD CORPORATION
MAR 18 MANCHESTER SOUND CONTROL
MAR 19 GLASGOW CLASSIC GRAND
MAR 20 BIRMINGHAM INSTITUTE TEMPLE
MAR 21 LONDON ELECTRIC BALLROOM

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JULY 4-6 KNEBWORTH PARK

STEEL PANTHER

MARCH 14 LINCOLN SHED
MARCH 15 WOLVERHAMPTON CIVIC
MARCH 16 MANCHESTER APOLLO
MARCH 18 NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY
MARCH 19 GLASGOW BARROWLAND
MARCH 20 SHEFFIELD O2 ACADEMY
MARCH 22 CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE
MARCH 23 BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY
MARCH 24 NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY
MARCH 26 LONDON O2 BRIXTON ACADEMY

WITHIN TEMPTATION

APR 11 MANCHESTER APOLLO
APR 12 LONDON WEMBLEY ARENA
APR 14 NEWCASTLE O2 ACADEMY
APR 15 GLASGOW O2 ACADEMY
APR 16 BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY

SUBTERRANEA

GOING UNDERGROUND

CONAN BAST

MAR 14 NOTTINGHAM STUCK ON A NAME STUDIOS
MAR 15 BOURNEMOUTH ANVIL
MAR 16 BIRMINGHAM ASYLUM
MAR 17 GLASGOW AUDIO
MAR 18 ABERDEEN TBC
MAR 19 MANCHESTER KRAAK
MAR 20 CARDIFF FULL MOON
MAR 21 BRIGHTON PRINCE ALBERT
MAR 22 LONDON ELECTROWERKZ

GORGOROTH VITAL REMAINS

APR 2 CARDIFF THE GLOBE
APR 3 MANCHESTER SOUND CONTROL
APR 4 LONDON GARAGE
APR 5 GLASGOW AUDIO

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APR 16-19 OSLO ROCKEFELLER/JOHN DEE

KAMPFAR HATE VELNIAS ISKALD

APR 3 LONDON UNDERWORLD

MGŁA SVARTIDAUDI GRAVE MIASMA ONE TAIL ONE HEAD

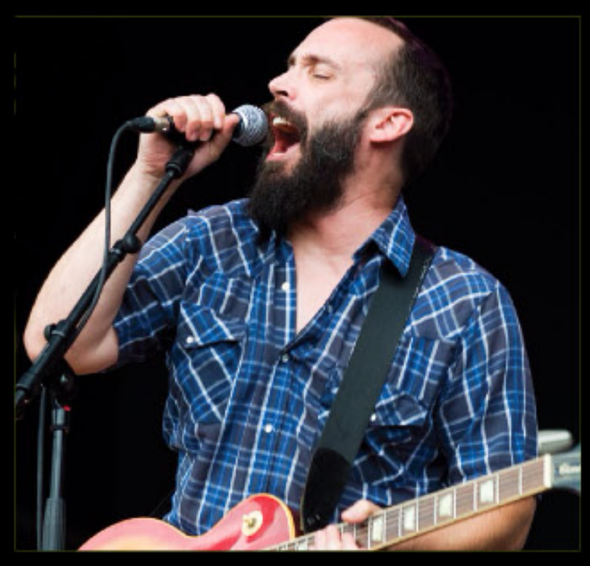
MAR 13 LONDON THE DOME

OLD MAN GLOOM CIRCLE BOSSK

APR 3 LONDON SCALA

TEMPLES FEST
ELECTRIC WIZARD, CLUTCH, NEUROSIS, AMENRA, BRUTAL TRUTH, BEASTMILK + MORE

MAY 2-4 BRISTOL MOTION



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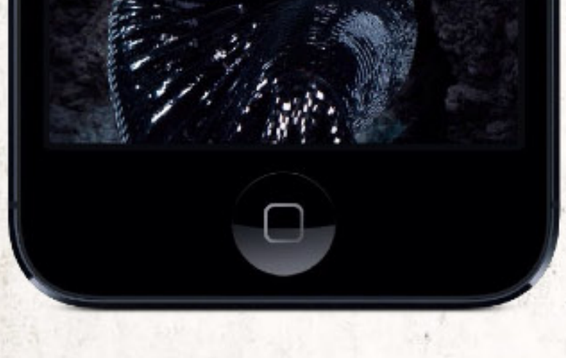

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SUBTERRANEA

"OUR ENTIRE LIVES HAVE BEEN ABOUT THE QUEST FOR THE UNKNOWN"

THE OATH

METAL'S DEADLY NEW DUO RAISE THE SPIRITS

THE WOUNDED KINGS

DOOM FROM THE DARTMOOR MISTS!

ALCEST

GALLIC DREAMERS WAFT OVER TO THE UK

DOZER

THE RESURGENCE OF STONER ROCK

PLUS! ALL THE MOST IN-DEPTH REVIEWS AND INTERVIEWS FROM THE OUTER LIMITS!!!

SWO TO THE D

WORDS: JONATHAN SELZER.

In August 2011, the day after her first lysergic experience, Linnéa Olsson went to see a psychic – not out of any particular inclination toward the New Age, but because she felt she'd hit an impasse in her native city of Stockholm and she needed a nudge.

"I was kind of lost," Linnéa recalls. "I didn't really know what to do and I went to see her on the recommendation of a friend. She starts telling me about my life. She tells me *everything*, basically. But she is completely spot on about what I do for a living and the people around me. She mentions my closest friends and describes them, how they look and what they do for living and tells me about the problems in my life. She also tells me that I'm going to leave Stockholm, I'm going to move to another country and I'm going to form a band… and with a woman. And at this point, I'm like, OK, fine. It's a lot of information to take in."

Linnéa pretty much forgot about it until a couple of years later, when living in Berlin and looking for a band. In Solitude's Henke Palm told her to get in touch with Johanna Claudia Sadonis, a local metal scene lifer who had a nascent band called The Oath.

Linnéa remembers the scene: "I saw her and it was in this bar. It was super-smoky and there was this really stunning blonde sitting in the corner downing vodka shots in a Venom shirt that looked like it was about to fall apart."

"It took us basically half an hour at the bar to realise," says Johanna. "We looked at each other and we were looking the same way – we both had the long blonde hair and the bangs and the same

"FINDING EACH OTHER WAS LIKE WINNING THE LOTTERY"

JOHANNA SADONIS'S NUMEROLOGY OBSESSION PAYS OFF

THE OATH

SUBTERRANEA

GOING UNDERGROUND

THE ARK

THE OATH'S ORIGINS LIE IN A SPOOKY SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT THEIR DEBUT ALBUM'S OCCULT VIBE IS THE DEEPLY PERSONAL RESULT OF TWO LIVES INTERTWINED.

metal shirts and the same skinny jeans and leather jacket. It clicked right away. So that was kind of like winning the lottery, finding each other."

The day they met was July 7, the seventh day of the seventh month, seven being a number with an ongoing significance for Johanna. '777' isn't just lucky at casinos, it was a magickal, kaballah-related number for Aleister Crowley; her early hero, Danzig, named a song after it; Johanna's name contains three times seven characters; her birthday is on the 21st – three times seven – and her father was the seventh child of seven children.

"This number keeps reappearing so heavily," Johanna explains, "that even if I did not want to notice it, it's there. And I think that's another sign for some things meaning to be the way they are. I identify with this number and if you carry this over to a spiritual thought, it symbolises me. I don't want to sound narcissistic, and for a lead singer I think I have a very small ego, but I am an over-emotional person and that I'm a vessel for feelings and sucking up like a sponge everything around me, and that's maybe why I'm open to these things."

Considering the forces and correspondences that brought Linnéa and Johanna together, you could be forgiven for expecting The Oath to steam ahead into the kind of occultic territory that's become so vogue of late. But for all its references to demons and Satan, the magic their self-titled debut album soaks up and circulates is resonant on wholly personal levels. No element, from opener *All Must Die*'s barrelling, statement-of-intent riffs, through *Night Child*'s irrepressible party-round-the-graveyard groove to *Psalm 7*'s atmospheric unfurling and wide-eyed declarations, is overplayed or added for effect, the fire at their heart stoked both by a sense of ongoing discovery and long dormant forces finally given voice. Johanna's wanton yet righteous vibrato is a beacon shone into shadowy, peripheral realms, locked onto great, punk-scuffed riffs that understand the power of primitivism is one that takes a particular dedication to unlock, but can also carve out ominous spaces where anticipation and trepidation combine into an intoxicated, nocturnal thrill ride that's both internal exorcism and a clarion call for free-roaming spirits everywhere.

"Maybe it is a little clichéd, using the words 'Satan' and 'demons'," admits Johanna, "and at first I didn't want to because I thought it was cheesy, but on the other hand, I thought if anyone is allowed to use them it's me, because I've been dwelling in these topics for my whole life and I thought that the first album I need to get it out of my system at least. These are the very essential kinds of terms that stand for things in life. There's a song and it could be inner demons – demons can stand for all kinds of things, and that's metaphorical, but not only."

The Oath: Linnéa Olsson (left) and Johanna Sadonis

SUBTERRANEA
GOING UNDERGROUND

Linnéa: exiled and exultant

Johanna: an emotional emissary

TINA KORHONEN

"OUR ENTIRE LIVES HAVE BEEN ABOUT THE QUEST FOR THE UNKNOWN"

LINNÉA OLSSON ON HER INNATELY ESOTERIC NATURE

"We're a heavy metal band and we like Satan and drugs," says Linnéa. "The way that we felt about that is that we're into classic hard rock and heavy metal and these are classic topics."

The Oath resides far from the quicksand of cliché, though, and in part that's down to the undercurrent of dislocation that runs through the album, that rather than just claim these entities as their own, shout a few 'Hail Satan's and be done with it, they're internalised and routes to an open-ended journey where all the co-ordinates haven't been fully mapped out.

"For me, it's an extremely personal record," says Linnéa, "and that's to do with a lot of things. It has to do with the personal development that I've gone through in this very short amount of time that the band has existed. I've also moved to a strange city and completely delved into something that was very different; like, for six months I didn't even go into a rock club, I just tried to go outside of my comfort zone and make new friends and see things that I hadn't experienced before. But it's also personal because this is the first time that I've been the only guitar player in a band, and this is the first time that I have written all the riffs myself. And I think for Johanna it's also the same way, and the whole record, as we were making it, we noticed that it started to manifest me and her in our relationship. And this is not something that we knew from the beginning. You could see it take form as we were making the album. And all of a sudden it became quite clear that the whole band and the whole energy that we were doing, was very much about the duality between me and her."

"I'm all more the overly emotional part of the band," say Johanna on the nature of that duality, "and Linnéa is the cool cat that plays the rock'n'roll guitar. That's exactly the differences between us, and we both need each other too with these sides."

"It was a very intense summer for both of us," Linnéa continues, "but during this time there were a lot of things happening, on a personal level and with the band and our relationship. And when these songs were written, we were at this headspace where things were really exciting but also kind of like we were jumping into something completely unknown. Also the way that they were written was very intuitive. There's an undercurrent of something a bit dark or sinister all the time in all the songs, even though they're very melodic and written in the way that they're real songs. It's important for us that these are songs and not just a bunch of riffs stapled on top of each other."

The Oath may be the first step for two artists who have a band they can both finally call their own and channel a rare energy that exists outside them in the connection between two kindred and complementary souls. But the band is also the culmination of two lives given wilfully to the cause of heavy metal.

"Our entire lives ever since we've been little girls have been about this kind of stuff," states Linnéa. "The music and also the curiosity, the quest for the unknown. When it comes to Johanna, this was something that has taken her all around the world, and she's been involved in that black metal scene right from the early 90s. And for me, I'm really interested in any kind of psychedelic dimension, and that obviously incorporates anything esoteric, so for this stuff, it comes naturally to us, I mean, this is heavy metal music. Heavy metal music is dark, and that's the way it's supposed to be."

Although the rise of bands steeped in 80s metal and references to the occult shows no sign of slowing down, the bands who are reaching beyond the level of hobby and taking their place in metal's ever-fertile canon are starting to distinguish themselves from the masses. "People do compare us to so many different bands," concludes Johanna, "and yes, all these bands are influences of ours, but paying homage was never our goal. We always had the drive to take these things and put them through our souls and spit out our very own vision of how we want something to sound. Reproducing other bands is really boring. You always want to surprise people somehow, and yourself." ✠

***THE OATH* IS OUT ON MARCH 17 VIA RISE ABOVE. THE OATH PLAY THE ROADBURN FESTIVAL, APRIL 10-12**

BERLIN BEYOND

THREE MORE MINDBENDING BANDS FROM THE OATH'S HOMETOWN.

THE OCEAN

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NECROS CHRISTOS

Doom-laden, imperious and sounding not unlike a colossal drill burrowing into the sulphurous pits of Hades, both their 2011 album *Doom Of The Occult* and live manifestations are awash with ceremony and defiling filth.

KADAVAR

This hirsute band's Sabbathian grooves are flecked with lurid psychedelic flourishes and are the icing on the LSD-drizzled cake. Bassist Simon 'Dragon' Bouteloup can be found pulsing away on *The Oath*, too.

Kadaver: hairy, scary and off their heads

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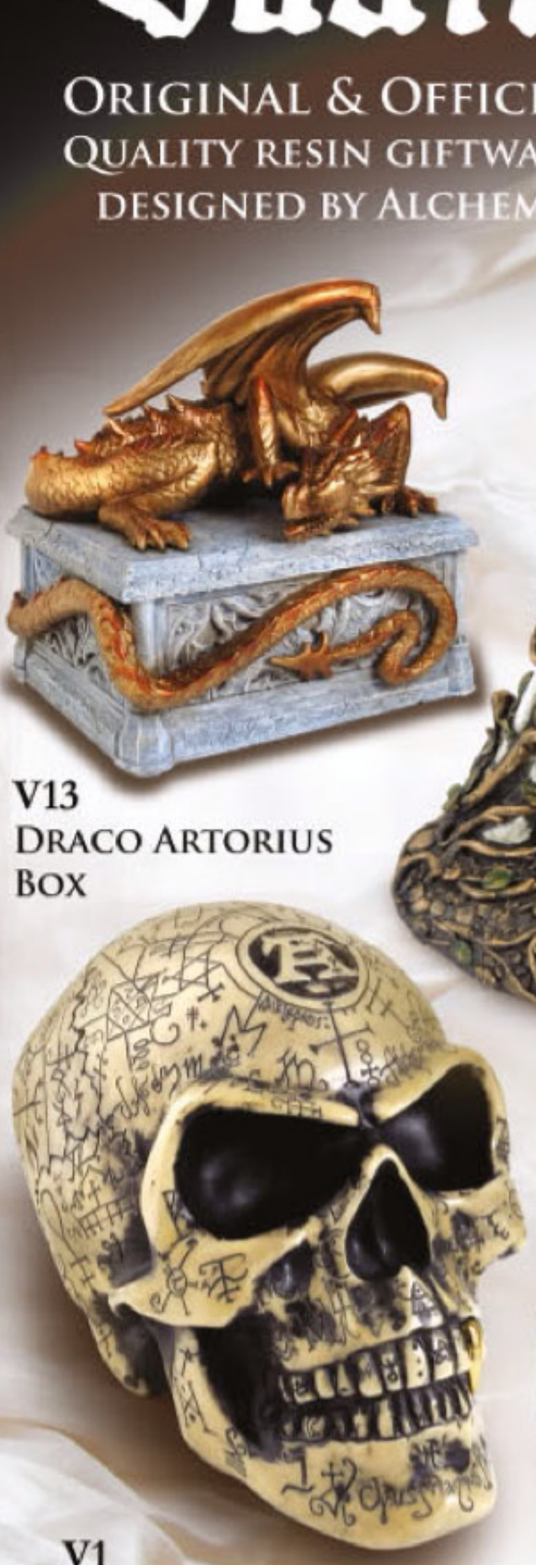

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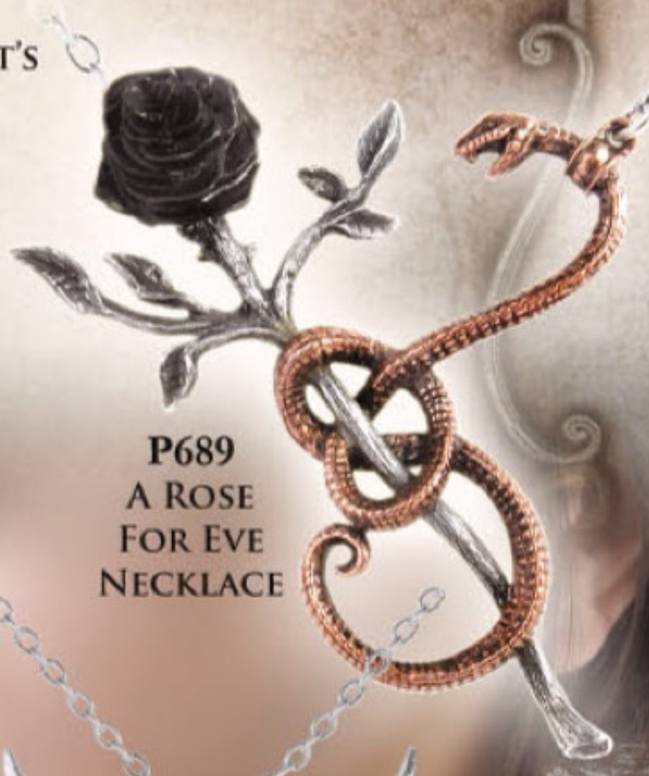

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THE WOUNDED KINGS

HALLOWED GROUNDS

WORDS: DOM LAWSON.

The Wounded Kings may be inspired by earthly concerns, but the five-piece have taken doom into otherworldly realms that many fear to tread.

Four hundred square miles of desolate, imposing countryside in Devon, Dartmoor oozes mystery. Not surprisingly, it has its own catalogue of unsettling myths that bolster the area's arcane, untamed allure. Stranded on the moor at night, even the most cynical of us might find themselves consumed with thoughts of Cutty Dyer, the malevolent sprite that some locals believe prowls the landscape, preying on drunks, slitting their throats and dumping their bodies in the river, or even the Devil himself, who's said to terrorise the moor at night, sending helpless travellers to their deaths off the top of notorious granite outcrop The Dewerstone. With these sinister threats lurking in the mist, Dartmoor is the perfect breeding ground for a band like The Wounded Kings: one of the UK's most revered doom metal bands and, as their new album *Consolamentum* demonstrates, one that has harnessed the restless spirits of the moor and used them to their own inspirational ends.

"I've been hiking on the moor and not seen anyone for fucking miles, especially in winter when no one can be arsed to go out there," founder member and guitarist Steve Mills notes. "You're alone with your thoughts and you can't help but be influenced by your surroundings. When you're up there on a desolate moor and there's nothing for miles but huge fucking tors and rocky outcrops, or you come across a stone circle... it can't help but get your mind working. People can say, 'Oh, you play doom because you're from Britain and it's miserable and raining...' and that has a part to play, but you can be on the moor and it's like that but then a minute later the sun comes through the clouds and it's the most beautiful landscape you've ever seen. That can be just as inspiring as being a miserable fucker in the rain."

Even ignoring the impact Steve's ominous surroundings have had on his songwriting over the years, The Wounded Kings' fourth album is overwhelmingly unique and affecting; a doom album that ticks all the usual boxes, but also taps into a powerful sense of eeriness and transcendental aspiration, its riffs and melodies conspiring to chip persistently away at the fourth wall of our consciousness. Although a genre that seemingly prides itself on its disdain for shallow modernity and the vacuous pursuit of evolutionary cool points, doom is as guilty as any enduring strain of heavy music when it comes to nurturing bands that simply abide by the rules and make no attempt to take listeners somewhere unfamiliar. *Consolamentum* represents the antithesis of that lazy mindset, its slow-motion Sabbathian hues acting as a tangible framework that deigns to make some kind of hazy sense out of the amorphous, shimmering disquiet that lurks just beneath the surface of the riffs. In contrast to his down-to-earth demeanour, the band's idiosyncratic sound speaks volumes about the depths of Steve's imagination.

"I just play the shit I've got going round my head," he admits. "Not taking anything away from the rest of the guys in the band, who bring their own identities to the music in the end, but it generally begins with me at home cranking something out on an acoustic guitar. I just have this sound in my head. I never really write songs in a normal sense, I just write segments of music. After I've written several, I then begin to think about how they work together and what flows into another section and makes it part of a journey. When I'm writing I don't listen to any metal or doom or anything – just soundtracks, Classic FM and Radio 4. I suppose in

The Wounded Kings (left to right): Alex Kearney, Myke Heath, Sharie Neyland, Steve Mills, Alex Eliadis

The Wounded Kings get swept away in the moment

A close encounter with their spiritual side

a way, the way the Kings' songs seem to go, it's almost like a soundtrack or a piece of classical music… they start in one place and finish somewhere completely different."

One powerful weapon that The Wounded Kings possess and which undoubtedly contributes to the overriding sense that this band are far more than just generic plodders is the extraordinary, otherworldly voice of singer Sharie Neyland. Female vocalists have become standard in doom metal over the last few years, not least due to a surge in occult rock bands with an obvious debt to the likes of Coven, Comus and Jex Thoth, but Sharie's presence on the album represents far more than just some superficial adherence to a trend. Her voice cuts through the melee of snail's pace sonic devastation with supreme elegance and fortitude, imbuing the Kings' wonderfully evocative sound with an extra layer of conviction and, dare we say it, magic. Although she sang ably on the band's previous album, 2011's *In The Chapel Of The Black Hand*, having replaced original vocalist George Birch, Sharie has grown into something far more potent than a traditional rock band focal point.

"As soon as I heard her I thought 'That's exactly what we're looking for!'" Steve enthuses. "It was *such* a voice. I was married to that voice straight away! And she's grown, you see. She sang on *Chapel*… but most of that was written before she joined. Over the three years since, we've done quite a few shows, and she's really grown into it. Her performance on *Consolamentum* is so different. She had a real input into the lyrics as well and if you've got a vocalist singing what *they've* written, there is much more feeling involved than if they're singing someone else's lyrics. With Sharie, I knew that she was what we needed and this album proves that beyond any doubt."

Perhaps the final piece of the puzzle that ensures that the Kings have evolved into something far more fascinating and distinct than the average beard-sporting, weed-addled rabble is that for all their otherworldly menace and Dartmoor-dwelling mystique, this is a band that increasingly eschews the escapist themes and macabre lyrical shtick that many of their peers rely on to their detriment. As Steve explains, *Consolamentum* is an album that aims straight for both the heart and the head, its physicality and mesmerising atmospheres emanating from shadows that exist in reality, rather than in some nebulous Lovecraftian hinterland.

"When we began there were a few elements from Poe and horror movies in the lyrics, but since then I've found the human condition way more chilling than anything anyone could write about or visualise in a horror movie," he says. "The albums since then have been about how we relate to each other, what our place is on Earth, the horrible things we can do to each other and ourselves, and to me that's *way* more doomy. What could be more chilling than someone you know being at home, isolated and contemplating suicide? That's some dark shit. The angle we've come from on *Consolamentum* is that it's about a spiritual rebirth and a struggle for a spiritual transformation in this world that's filled with greed, control and fear. It's about how you can steer your way through and hopefully get to a place where you feel fulfilled. Every now and then, this music can make that happen." ✠

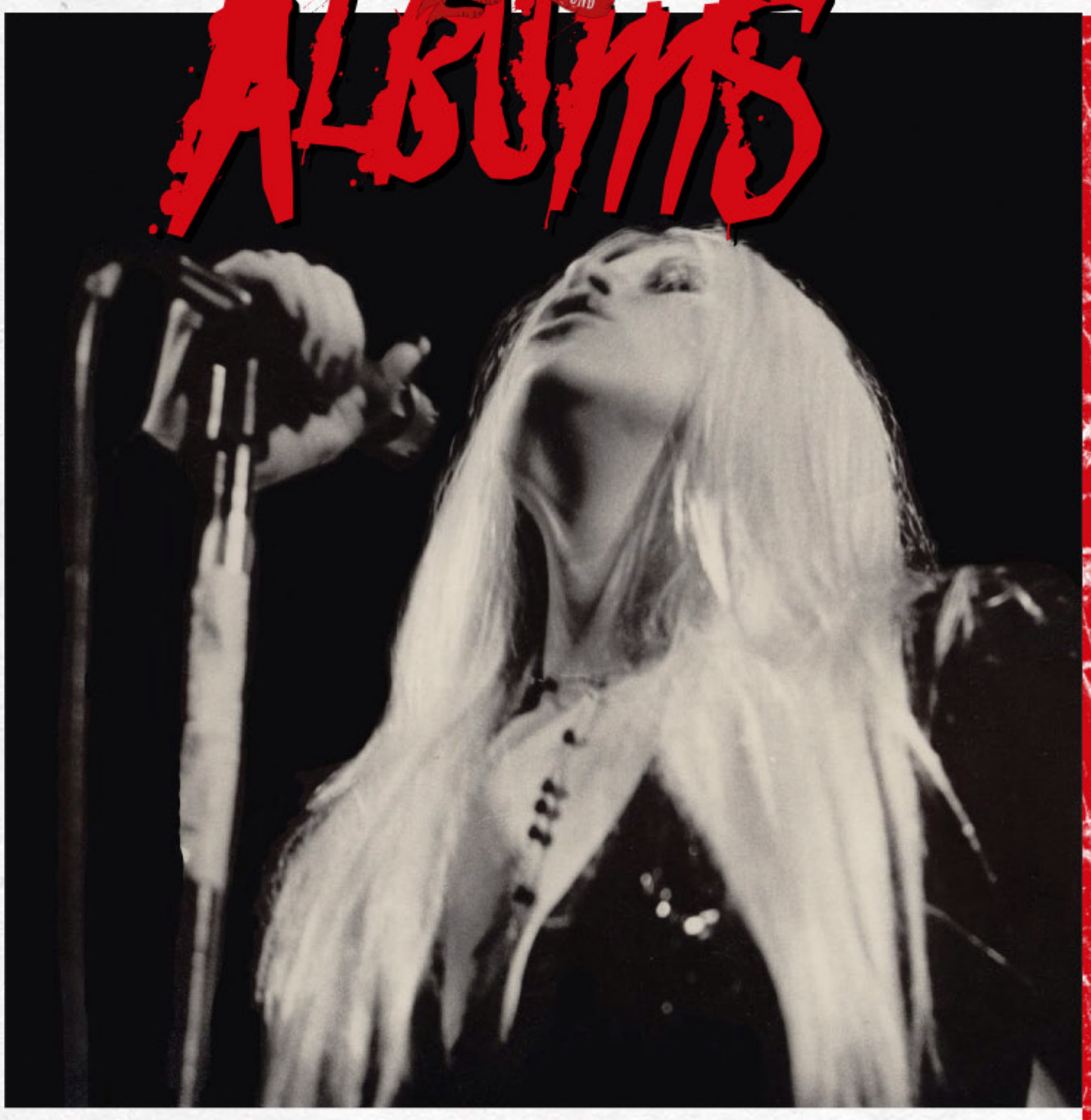
"THE HUMAN CONDITION IS WAY MORE CHILLING THAN ANYTHING IN A HORROR MOVIE"

STEVE MILLS RELIES ON HIS INNER EYE

***CONSOLAMENTUM* IS OUT NOW VIA CANDLELIGHT**

SUBTERRANEA
GOING UNDERGROUND

ALBUMS



Coven

JINX

| NEVOC MUSIC COMPANY |

Occult rock instigators invoke the spirits again

Love it or hate it, so-called 'occult rock' is one of today's burgeoning sub-genres. We say 'so-called' as some of those involved appear to have read a few Dennis Wheatley novels, liked the covers and formed a band. To unearth the roots of occult rock, however, we need to go back in time to the late 60s, and what we find is a group who took their subject matter very seriously indeed. Released in 1969 (crucially pre-dating Black Sabbath), *Witchcraft Destroys Minds & Reaps Souls* was the debut from Chicago's Coven and is generally regarded as the ground zero of occult rock. That Sabbath were a million times more successful both in terms of sales and in receiving credit for taking diabolical themes to the mainstream is but a twist of fate. Coven issued two further albums to little avail, but their legend lived on long enough to capture a new audience in the internet age. Spurred on by this renewed interest, the band reformed in 2007 and have finally completed this, their big comeback.

Fronted by fiery-tongued diva Jinx Dawson, *Jinx* finds Coven in surprisingly sprightly form. The demented vocals, loopy guitar solos and fruity rhythms of opener *Out Of Luck* are instantly recognisable but they're strangely contemporary too. Things really have come full circle. Elsewhere, the jaunty harpsichord and fuzz guitar interplay

of *Epitaph* and the quirky *Black Swan* (as featured on 2008 compilation *Metal Goth Queen – Out Of The Vault*) emphasise the traditional Coven sound, but there are deviations. The almost industrial backbeat and metallic guitar driving *To The Devil A Daughter*, and the virtually unrecognizable reworking of debut album nugget *Wicked Woman* may leave some older fans cold, but in the end the sheer quirkiness of the whole thing wins the day. The glitterball groove and funky basslines of *Danger JuJu Goat*, for example, are simply irresistible, while the searing harpsichord and Hammond organ hoedown on the epic *Quick And The Dead* is wonderfully eccentric. Even the church organ grind of closer *Ave Satanas* has its own unique charm. A righteous return.

7

GREG MOFFITT

Acheron

KULT DES HASSE

| LISTENABLE |

Cult US death metal blasphemers return on blazing form

Wizened veterans of the US death metal underground, Acheron have revelled in cult status and notoriety for over 25 years, tirelessly pursuing a course of anti-Christian extremity and fervent blasphemy. Not surprisingly, not a lot has changed for *Kult Des Hasse*, the band's first album since briefly splitting and then reforming in 2010. Founder member Vincent Crowley's vision has always been a precise and forceful one; this adheres to the same template of predominantly mid-paced, Celtic Frost-tinged riffing and guttural declarations of unholy fervour that fans have come to expect, but there is a strong air of renewed enthusiasm and intensity within the likes of *Daemonum Lux* and *Misanthropic Race* that makes this far more than an exercise in delivering the gruesome goods. The dark ceremonial chants of *Satan Holds Dominion* and the elegant melodic flourishes of *Jesus Wept (Again And Again)* add dynamic nuance to proceedings, but even in the grotesque bludgeon of *Whores And Harlots*, Acheron bring depth and subtlety to this pure and heartfelt expression of death metal values. The ancient gods will be duly delighted.

8

DOM LAWSON

Ass To Mouth

DEGENERATE

| SELFMADEGOD |

Unhygienic if generic grindcore from Polish jokers

Kicking off with a sample from *Leaving Las Vegas*, a movie that chronicles a time in Nicolas Cage's career where he was a respected actor and not a bearsuit-wearing YouTube sensation, Ass To Mouth's *Degenerate* is a spirited, if ultimately hellishly generic bit of grindcore. It doesn't outstay its welcome, its 20 tracks blazing by in half an hour, but anyone with even the slightest affinity with grindcore has heard this all before and done better too, whether it's through the kaleidoscopic gonzo violence of Agoraphobic Nosebleed or the everything's-a-joke approach of any one of Seth Putnam's numerous projects (although the song about Facebook, *You Have 0 Friends* on *Degenerate* is a title almost worthy of the great man himself). Despite this, there's some bracing d-beat stuff here, and the fun they're clearly having with songtitles like *One Mackerel Drama* is palpable, so it's hard to dislike. Fresh ideas aren't forthcoming here but blastbeats and politically incorrect ravings are, so perhaps *Ass To Mouth* is worth a try.

6

DANIEL CAIRNS

Cripple Bastards

NERO IN METASTASI

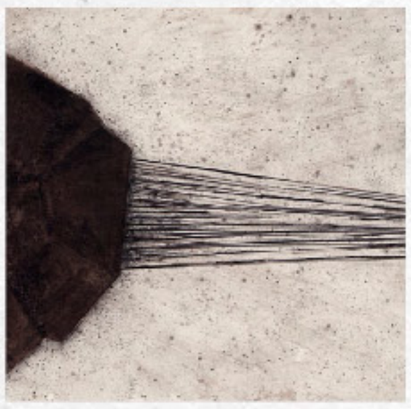
| RELAPSE |

Italian grind heroes get back to roots at double speed

It may be difficult to fathom our referring to a band with a mere five full-lengths to their name after 26 years as prolific, but Italian grind hounds Cripple Bastards' volume of EPs and splits are legend and indicative of a band continually on the move. As evidence, their *Acts Of Vandalism 1987-1993* four-disc collection of impenetrable early-years noisecore is a record-breaking hop-skip-and-jump away from today's structured cohesion. But that's not to say they're getting soft and doughy with age. When compared to the death metal overtones of previous album *Variante Alla Morte, Nero...* is leaner, meaner and more dynamic. It's also a few notches up in the speed department, which will always be news for grind fans to fly up the flagpole. The new dual-guitar attack delivers a rawer, hardcore punk feel to the riffs – fewer single notes, more two-beat drumming – with vocalist Giulio The Bastard continuing his poetic disgust for environmental degradation, humanity's hypocrisy, bureaucratic red tape and antiquated morality with his most ferocious delivery since he was 15 and singing through a blown-out bass amp.

8

CONNIE GORDON



Dirge

HYPERION

| DEBEMUR MORTI PRODUCTIONS |

Titanic and sublimely tortuous sludge from Gallic veterans

Two decades and six albums in, With *Hyperion* this hypnotically heavy French five-piece have delved back into sludgy masses of sound while maintaining calmer moments that bring a rounded, tangible core to their music. Dirge utilise ravaged, throaty sounds to build the level of oppression into monolithic proportions and on opener *Circumploaris* the gloriously crunched-down waves of sound curl around the steadfast voice that carries the song into realms so weighty they'd give Atlas a hernia. *Hyperion Under Glass* treads near-funeral doom territory before seguing into gentle, serene passages that conjure a feeling of bliss – albeit one that could be broken at any moment. Gorgeous elements of synth colour the track with steady, repetitive lines that sink deep into the bones and take root, the flowing sound pushing forward and controlling the rhythm with preternatural ease. Dirge may not be a name on everyone's lips despite the length of their career, but *Hyperion* will do much to change that.

8

CHERYL CARTER

Kuoleman-laakso

TULIJOUTSEN

| SVART |

Rustic death-doomsters provide a little too much clarity

Their name means 'Death Valley', the album title something about swans – fitting as they were turned loose by My Dying Bride 21 years ago and gothic-death-doom enthusiasts have been obsessively trying to recapture them ever since. *Tulijoutsen* is the second full-length from these nature-worshipping Finnish romanticists, and there's a crisp, pine-scented drama about the clarion axe melodies of *Me Vaellamme Yössä* ('We Walk In The Night') and *Musta* ('Black'), guitars steeped in the noble tradition of Gregor Mackintosh's forlorn elegance with inevitable nods to Amorphis. Although recorded "in a secluded location in the middle of the woods" it feels too slick and controlled to truly evoke the rural wilderness of their homeland, which appears to be the quintet's motivation, plus the sub-Dani Filth screeching and standard-issue monotone death growls are seldom very expressive or interesting and there's too much unexceptional chugging. However, there are agreeable surprises here and there, with *Glastonburyn Lehto* ('Glastonbury Grove') succeeding as a slinky, eccentric sort of Scott Walker-esque Baltic folk showtune.

6

CHRIS CHANTLER

Mount Salem

ENDLESS

| METAL BLADE |

Female-fronted stoner quartet debut in high style

In existence for less than two years, sharing stages with Weedeater, Bongripper and every other band who allude to heroic consumption of the chronic and making no bones about their influences – Black Sabbath and Pentagram – Chicago's Mount Salem aren't too ambiguous about the direction in which they are headed. Yet what sets their stoner-psych doom apart from the hairy hordes is vocalist/organist Emily Kopplin. The atmospheric howl she unleashes throughout *Endless* provides a much-needed counterpoint to the righteous musical stink kicked up by the band of bandana-wearing bearded dudes around her. Highlights come in the shape of the atmospheric lounge lizard piece *Mescaline* and the crushing companion song *Mescaline II*, whose bottom end will blur speakers. The stabbing snippets of organ also lend extra weight to songs such as album closer *The End*, a tune as dramatic and portentous as The Doors song of the same name. Stacked up, the eight songs on Mount Salem's debut full-length make for a fairly heady ride whose fugue-like state should rightfully leave you dry-mouthed, confused and surrounded by empty junk food wrappers.

8

BEN MYERS

The Oath

THE OATH

| RISE ABOVE |

A groove-laden trip into the shadows from Berlin-based duo

There's something magical about retro rock, and its sultry, sensual style is certainly suited to the hazy rhythms of The Oath, whose glances into the musical past and the occult never treads trite ground or tries too damn hard. The Swedish/German twosome that make up The Oath met by chance yet their shared passion for stinging guitar solos and deadly rhythms brought them together to form a project that'll be giving Uncle Acid a run for his money. *The Oath* feels vital and its slinking aura breathes into *Night Child*, wrapping it in fiery guitars while Johanna Sadonis's accented drawl gives the record an exotic presence that follows into *Black Rainbow* and beyond. The Oath touch on their peers' legacy (there's more than a little Sabbath in there and the aforementioned *Black Rainbow* segues into Mercyful Fate territory at times), but the two ladies behind this group are more than able to carry the music forward and into the realms of modernity quite succinctly and successfully. *The Oath* will be etched on everyone's lips this year, don't miss it.

8

CHERYL CARTER

Bong

STONER ROCK

| RITUAL PRODUCTIONS |

Tantric drone wizards look to their Sunn-y side

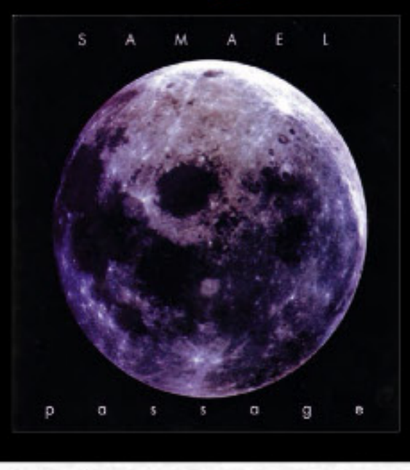
Bong just get better and better. The North-East England, heavy, psychedelic, occult drone ensemble are assured enough in what they are doing to have a bit of fun at their own expense. The title *Stoner Rock* is a tongue-in-cheek dig at the shallow, codified form of mainstream rock this subgenre has become, while the cover art of the base of a stone temple flanked by a gateway of human femurs pokes fun at their own aesthetic influenced by such fantastical and magickal writers as HP Lovecraft and Austin Osman Spare. They are fully aware that they now operate from a core so solid that there is no ephemerality left to puncture. As on the last album, *Manna Yood Sushai*, they have opted for two lengthy, repetitive, monolithic, mid-paced, improvised drone rock numbers both in excess of 30 minutes long. There is a perception of Bong as being grimey, murky and sludgy in sound and execution but this is a perception that should be cleansed along with one's third eye. *Polaris* is like the towering brass gates of Heaven inching open until the merest crack of light sears the retinas with divine radiance. One chord – countless possibilities.

9

JOHN DORAN

Original Sins

A CLASSIC ALBUM FROM THE DARKEST VAULT



SAMAEL | *Passage* | CENTURY MEDIA

These days, bands departing the black metal nest has almost become a rite of passage. Back in the mid-90s, however, even amongst a subgenre already opening itself up to all kinds of experimentation and cross-pollination, Samael's fourth album, released in 1996, proved explosive. Even if the Swiss band's previous album, *Ceremony Of Opposites*, saw them moving away from their Nordic-styled BM towards a more groove-laden sound, *Passage* brought in industrial elements and programmed drums that fully cut ties with its past, but whose resolutely mid-paced, still gritty grandeur set off a shockwave whose echoes you can hear in the likes of Rotting Christ, Moonspell and, arguably, Rammstein as well.

The Wounded Kings get the full cab workout

The Wounded Kings

CONSOLAMENTUM

| CANDLELIGHT |

Moors aren't the merrier for UK doomsters

It's surprising that the West Country hasn't produced more doom metal, really. You'd think the genre would thrive in a landscape dotted with stone circles and ancient burial mounds, with easy access to magic mushrooms and mindbending cider, plus a local scene leader as hallowed as Electric Wizard. The Wounded Kings (with familial connections to the House of Oborn) hail from Dartmoor, and desolate expanses of craggy moorland can't help but form in the listener's mind as the opening chords of *Gnosis* ring out. The Wizard influence still lingers like mist in a cemetery over these juddering riffs and wah-wah jams (particularly on fleeting one-riff interlude *Elige Magistrum*), but a distinct personality emerges on the quintet's fourth album, *Consolamentum*. The catalyst for this development is singer Sharie Neyland, whose mystical, haunted voice never loses its commanding power amid witchy retro posing. Although there's no shortage of occult-chanting sirens fronting doom units these days, there is something singularly impressive about Sharie's moody ululations, somehow managing to channel the spiralling celestial melodies of Solitude Aeturnus's Robert Lowe as well as the otherworldly strains of Manilla Road's Mark Shelton, especially on the title track's gloriously overwrought chorus. *Gnosis* develops into a textbook occult doom labyrinth, with passages of slothful drudgery breaking into swinging stoned grooves and subtle use of Hammer Horror Hammond heightening haunted-house atmospherics. Tumbling acoustic chords are equally effective at striking a mood of fearful rustic disturbance, though mellow campfire interlude *Space Conqueror* is a little throwaway. In fact, of the seven tracks here, three are brief, inconsequential fragments, leaving four fair-sized and fine doom epics. As a long-player *Consolamentum* feels faintly incomplete and uneven, but there's plenty to relish here for devotees of *Vinum Sabbathi* and The Wounded Kings' future as a dependable British doom warhorse is secured by the chemistry that they're audibly perfecting with their new frontwoman.

7

CHRIS CHANTLER

Pyrrhon

THE MOTHER OF VIRTUES

| RELAPSE |

Twisted, deathly dreams from metal's newest sickos

Mere seconds into 85-second opener *The Oracle Of Nassau* it becomes plain that Pyrrhon are not bothered about courting those who like their extreme metal neatly pinned to a Pro-Tools grid. As with recent albums by Gorguts and Portal, *The Mother Of Virtues* is hewn from the stuff of nightmares, its chaotic gait and devotion to dissonance and deviance ensuring that, at times, it barely sounds like a metal album at all. The excruciating unease that oozes from every sonic pore during the meandering sludge of *White Flag* and *Eternity In A Breath* owes as much to Bauhaus, Neurosis and Dead Kennedys as it does to Morbid Angel, and yet that all-important atmosphere of blasphemous rage is here in abundance too. The most concise song here, *Sleeper Agent*, begins with a hypnotic tribal thud before disintegrating into a maelstrom of repugnant discord. In contrast, *Invisible Injury* is a sustained blur of third-eye blasting and spittle-flecked confusion – a wince-inducing belch of acrid noise, direct from Chthulu's knotted colon. These are sick, sick men and this is a masterful mission statement.

8

DOM LAWSON

Solstice

DEATH'S CROWN IS VICTORY

| INTO THE VOID |

Revered true doom heroes return from the void

Two decades on from their debut LP, *Lamentations*, and 15 years since its follow-up *New Dark Age*, British doom legends Solstice have yet to tackle that 'difficult' third album. That day, however, may be one step closer as they rouse themselves from slumber with this EP, their first recording in 13 years. After three years or so of writing and rehearsing, the quintet – helmed by founding axeman Rich Walker – have finally deemed themselves ready for the studio, and the results do not disappoint. Featuring two 10-minute mini-epics bookended by a pair of rousing and atmospheric instrumentals, *Death's Crown...* is forceful and invigorating. Offering a blend of heroic trad metal and thundering doom, it's a banner-waving, chest-beating call to arms that refuses to be ignored. In a decade that's seen doom splinter into a byzantine blizzard of subgenres and sub-subgenres, it's nice to dispense with posing and pretension and get a good old iron fist to the face.

7

GREG MOFFITT

The Tower

HIC ABUNDANT LEONES

| BAD OMEN |

Doom/psych that resonates with the dawn of time

Long before Google mapped every peak, valley and molehill on Earth, Medieval cartographers labelled uncharted territories with the dramatic designation, 'Hic Abundant Leones', meaning 'Lions Abound Here'. Admittedly, dark caveats of murderous, flesh-tearing beasts sounds infinitely more impressive than saying, "We're really not sure what's over here." Likewise, The Tower have borrowed this Latin appellation for the title of their debut, implying that its nine tracks bustle with inscrutable melodies and dark, perilous passages. In fact, *Hic...* offers a groovy and utterly accessible clutch of 70s doom/psych metal that draws generously from the rivers of Sabbath, Sir Lord Baltimore and proto-metal pioneers like Lucifer's Friend. Rumbling, fuzzed-out basslines take centre stage on *Adrenalawine* and *Wounds*, while other tracks such as the storming *Lions At The Gate* reveal The Tower's classic rock sensibilities with a lighter-raising fretboard showcase that establishes that guitarist August is no stranger to the works of James Marshall Hendrix. Awash in gelatinous grooves and druggy psychedelic bluster, perhaps the one down-side to *Hic Abundant Leones* is that halfway through, you feel like throwing on the classics instead.

5

JOE DALY

Vampire

VAMPIRE

| CENTURY MEDIA |

Sweden's demonic death/thrashers go for the throat

Vampire are unashamedly old school in outlook; 2012's debut demo was a cassette tape and then seven-inch vinyl-only affair, long sold out thanks to internet word-of-mouth. Following their blistering set at last year's Live Evil, anticipation was high for their debut long player, and rightly so. Vampire hail from the Swedish city of Gothenburg, but don't expect polished and polite melodeath. Instead, they go for the throat, so to speak, with the ferocious sounds of early Slayer and Possessed, tempered with the occasional slab of lead-heavy Hellhammer. The likes of *At Midnight I'll Possess Your Corpse* and *Ungodly Warlock* straddle the line between thrash and death metal the way the likes of Infernal Majesty and Sacrifice did in the late 80s. Oddly, while they don't sound the same, they share some of the aesthetic feel of the likes of Watain and In Solitude – the same dark fore-boding and the sense of total immersion in their craft. Retro-gressive they may be, but with the warmth and rawness of 80s metal the production still hits like a sledgehammer. See for yourself what all the fuss is about.

8

ALASTAIR RIDDELL

Inspirations From Beyond

LG PETROV Entombed A.D.

DEVASTATION

A Creation Of Ripping Death

"When I heard that demo, I got hooked up on Troy Dixler's vocals, and I took all my influences from him. They were broken vocals but you could still hear what he sang, it was not just a blurry wall. I'm going to listen to it later on!"

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THE TOWER - HIC ABUNDANT LEONES

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In this midnight hour, lightning splits the sky and pride is burnt with fire. Stones begin to crumble. Only fools build towers. Thunder roars, enlightening. The offbeat freakbeat and phantasmagorical psych-blues of Hic Abundant Leones exude an ageless charm and resounding singularity, striking eerie, dreamlike atmospheres that seemingly confirm The Tower's eccentric parallel-universe narrative.

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Alcest's Neige causes a stir

Hexvessel: Mat McNerney goes soul mining

Alcest

HEXVESSEL/THE FAUNS

ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALLS, LONDON

Gallic dreamers keep one foot in the past

Sure, it's not explicitly metal, but when were Alcest ever that?

Strangely for a band who are currently converting swathes of new fans, Alcest are playing only one UK show this tour, and it's here at the Islington Assembly Halls, a venue whose Grade 2 listing the promoters have been proudly advertising. And it has to be said, it *is* an impressive setting that would make a welcome addition to the London metal gig circuit. Not that this is really a metal gig, mind you – **THE FAUNS' [7]** rather bewitching indie pop (somewhat akin to The Naked And Famous's more laidback moments) might raise a few eyebrows by the black metal contingent of the crowd, but it's an apt choice given the nature of Alcest's current demographic. After all, the Frenchmen are currently getting no small amount of flak from the extreme metal world due to the perceived 'softness' of their current material...

But before we get to that, we have **HEXVESSEL [7]**, whose psychedelic folk rock tonight feels more articulate and concise than ever before. For all its meanderings and rich textures, the band's music is surprisingly angular in contrast to the more blurred lines of the other two acts tonight. Indeed, there's something in the delivery of these songs that – at the high points of the set at least – manage to bore right into the soul. Understated though they are, this is a band that also frequently command your attention with their presence and delivery.

All the same, it is **ALCEST [8]** who are the highlight tonight, even if their performance is a tad inconsistent. That's possibly a reflection on their songs in general, or an observation that some of them work far better live than others – what it isn't, is a slating of the new material. Sure, it's not explicitly metal, but when were Alcest ever that? And what the group *have* retained is the power to stir the emotions and offer genuinely touching moments, whether on older classics such as *Souvenirs D'un Autre Monde* or a new composition such as *Délivrance*. There's a mesmerising ebb-and-flow at work here, and at its very best the ambience is as dreamy, pure and uplifting as the childhood visions that are said to inspire Neige's works.

DAYAL PATTERSON

Alcest put the 'vert' into 'introvert

Winter Warmer Weekend

Windmill, London

Curating an event full of underground, downtuned, edge-of-the-sphere heavy metal is a daunting task but the Winter Warmer Weekender more than pulls it out of the bag with this first day of glorious sludge. **SEALCLUBBER [7]** start it all off with a slow, filthy crawl that builds and breaks into **WOLFSHEAD**'s **[7]** crunched-down and fuzzy tone before **IN THE HILLS [8]** stalk the floor with an intensity that pushes the crowd back in increasingly small but noticeable movements. **GRIMPEN MIRE**'s **[8]** slightly more doomed take on sludge is devastatingly heavy and leads into the weighty dirge of drum and bass duo **GHOLD [8]** with considerable effect. Belfast's **WAR IRON [8]** are on mighty form tonight, with frontman Andrew Bagwell commanding the room with throat-ravaging rasps and guttural roars before **PALEHORSE [9]** arrive and blow everyone else out of the water. Their brand of sludge is wonderfully unique – all bass, no guitar, curious electronic glitches and two vocalists – and the dense layers and revealing sections of their sound are made for the live arena. *Bird Feed* crushes and final track *One, But Not Metallica* allows Palehorse to writhe with the dirty inflections they execute so well.

Bournemouth doomsters **GREENHORN [6]** are not without promise and know their way around a riff, but it's a generic set that starts off the second day, clearly lacking in stage presence. **NOMAD [8]** however, more than make up for that shortfall. The band – replete with Fabien Barthez doppelgänger guitarist – are clearly enjoying themselves and frontman Drian's stage mannerisms aren't a million miles from a sludge metal Jonathan Davis. That's not an insult. **DAY OF LOCUSTS' [6]** more cerebral approach to doom isn't as much fun, but they're engaging enough when they get going. **MOTHER CORONA [7]** are more on the stoner rock side of the fence, but what they lack in foul mood they make up for in enthusiasm. **SLABDRAGGER [9]** are on another plane. They're jawdropping: musically tight and absolutely feral. Few recent bands know their way around hulking great sludge riffs better than this lot and the new stuff they play is even better, too. **NECRO DEATHMORT [8]** take a while to get going due to recalcitrant machinery, but once they're off they shoot for the stratosphere with their electronica/doom hybrid like morose astronauts. The swirling *Endless Vertex* is colossal a highlight as the dry ice and light show adds to the otherworldly gloominess.

CHERYL CARTER/DANIEL CAIRNS

ALCEST: ESTER SEGERRA/DOZER: DEREK BREMNER

Dozer sacrifice trippiness for propulsive force

Dozer: Tommi Holappa feels the force

Lowrider: desert rock delirium

Dozer

LOWRIDER/ STEAK

GARAGE, ISLINGTON

Swedes put the 'high' in Highbury

For all the brickbats that were thrown its way after it had supposedly overstayed its welcome, stoner rock is clearly back in rude health right now. Its various mutations have started overlapping each other in a colour wheel of desert, psych and fuzz strands, boutique labels such as Germany's Elecktrohasch and Spain's Alone Records providing richly furnished outposts and pretty much any gig of its kind in London drawing hordes of plaid-shirted devotees. So it shouldn't be a surprise that the return of stoner rock's Swedish vanguard, Dozer and Lowrider, after both bands resurrected themselves for last year's Desertfest, has sold out the Garage – but to walk inside and feel the level of excitement among an audience for whom this music is clearly some kind of soul-enriching Manna just goes to show how strong this scene really is. It's a busy crowd for openers **STEAK [7]** too, the Londoners looking like they each belong to a different band, but locking together to become something more than the sum of its parts. They're yet more textured in sound live than they are on record as massive, bristling grooves expand, irrigated by Reece Tee's riffs. The likes of *Liquid Gold* sound like a bomber borne by successive updrafts, and there's a combination of weight and ethereality that thrills and reminisces in equal measure.

The opening riffs for *Caravan* are red meat to everyone who called **LOWRIDER [8]** Kyuss clones back in the day, but tonight the endorphin rush proves singular, or at the very least overwhelming to the point where stepping outside the moment to make comparisons would only kill the buzz. Groovier live than you can remember their forebears ever being, the band seem to pull the music from outside themselves, passing it around each other like good-humoured mediums. Lanky frontman and bassist Peder Bergstrand is a loose lightning rod for a joy that pulses through every song as *Dust Settlin's* compressed spring-loaded punch hijacks the entire room's collective nervous system. Occasional 70s stomps provide an equally impulsive underpinning and with guitarist Olla Helquist taking his turn on the mic to add an extra psychedelic tone, Lowrider create a gravity that draws itself into something that feels universal. By the time Dozer's Fredrik Nordin joins them towards the end the room has reached delirium pitch.

DOZER [6] themselves take a more stripped-down approach that does little for the night's momentum, the likes of *Feelgood Formula* relying instead on more direct but overlayered riffs that sacrifice trippy vibe for a more linear propulsive force and never feel quite as accommodating or euphoric as their compatriots. Dozer rock, but there's an enchanting element missing as the sound and the crowd starts to thin out.

JONATHAN SELZER

CONFESSIONS

HE'S THE LORD OF SALEM, MORE HUMAN THAN HUMAN AND A PROLIFIC ARTIST IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE. MAY WE PRESENT...

ROB ZOMBIE

HOW DID IT FEEL TO CALL MARILYN MANSON A 'PUNK ASS BITCH' FROM THE STAGE IN 2012?

"Well... I kind of wish I did that *backstage*. It was kind of ridiculous. I hate doing stuff like that... but my emotions got the better of me. As soon as I get mad, I kind of lose it."

WHAT IS THE WORST THING YOU'VE READ ABOUT YOUR BAND?

"That's a long list, but probably the worst thing I've read was one of the first things I read. When White Zombie's first Geffen record came out this magazine called *Alternative Press* reviewed it and the first line was like, 'This is the worst band ever.' And it went downhill from there!"

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO REUNITE WHITE ZOMBIE?

"It wouldn't be a financial thing, it'd take a *reason* to do it. That's why it never happened, because there's no reason to do it. I like playing with the band I'm playing with now much more than I ever liked playing with White Zombie. And I think people *think* they want to see it, but a lot of times bands reform and disappoint people. I don't think there's anything that could make it happen."

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING YOU'VE SEEN WHILE HIGH?

"This was not recreational, but when I was a little kid for some reason I was so over-prescribed with drugs that I was on, like, seven different pills, and I remember sitting on my bed and my ventriloquist doll that was sitting by the window started talking to me – it was about 40 years ago and I still remember it clearly."

"I WAS ON SEVEN DIFFERENT PILLS AND MY VENTRILOQUIST DOLL STARTED TALKING TO ME"
ROB ZOMBIE

HAVE YOU GOT ANY PHOBIAS OR IRRATIONAL FEARS?

"Not really. I'm kinda proud of that, I don't fear heights or snakes or anything like that. I probably *should* have fears of things, because sometimes I don't worry about things I should worry about, I just have this feeling everything will work out fine."

WHAT WAS THE MOMENT YOU REALISED YOU'D MADE IT AS A ROCKSTAR?

"I was doing a charity event recently and was in the dressing room with Alice Cooper, who I've known for 20 years, and Gene Simmons, who I've known for a long time. And I got a picture of us three together and at that moment I was like, 'Wow, this is a little odd', because when I was a kid these guys were huge, I mean *huge*, larger-than-life, superstars as big as you can be. And here I am with them. That was one of those moments."

WHAT'S YOUR WEIRDEST EXPERIENCE WITH A FAN?

"Many years ago a local radio station had a contest; whoever did the most extreme thing with the station's 'call letters' got to meet the band. So one guy decided the best thing he could think of would be to take a razorblade and carve the letters into his chest. So the station was like, 'Hey, meet Kevin!', and in comes this kid with blood gushing from his chest where he'd carved it up. That was pretty weird I guess."

ASIDE FROM PROPERTY, WHAT'S THE MOST EXPENSIVE THING YOU'VE EVER BOUGHT?

"I bought an Argentinian Frankenstein poster, an original poster. There are only two left supposedly. I can't remember what I paid for it – $50,000 or $70,000 – and at the time that was the most expensive useless thing I ever bought."

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ARRESTED OR COME CLOSE?

"I've never actually been arrested, I'm quite proud of that, but I came close. Mainly on tour. In the early days of touring I had a big mouth and I'd say things like, 'Hey, everyone come on down' and suddenly there'd be hundreds of kids storming the stage. The amount of times I went onstage and there were police ready to arrest me was ridiculous. I always talked my way out of it."

WHAT'S YOUR DANCING LIKE?

"Well, I hear it's pretty good. People always say, 'Oh wow, you're a really good dancer', although I would never ever get up and dance where people were dancing. But for some reason people think I'm a great dancer. And I don't want to prove them wrong by dancing!" ✠

ROB ZOMBIE PLAYS DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL IN JUNE

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU WERE TOTALLY STARSTRUCK?

"I went to see The Who with a friend who's related to Roger Daltrey, so we went backstage and I knew I'd talk to Roger, so that was cool. But when I was leaving I ran into Pete Townshend and I was surprised how much I felt. Spontaneously being introduced to Pete Townshend kinda freaked me out."

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